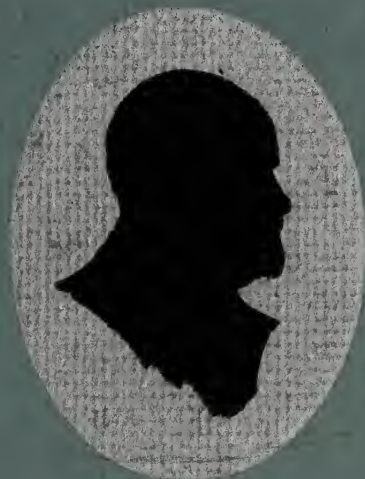


# CITIZEN COLE OF CHICAGO



By HOYT KING

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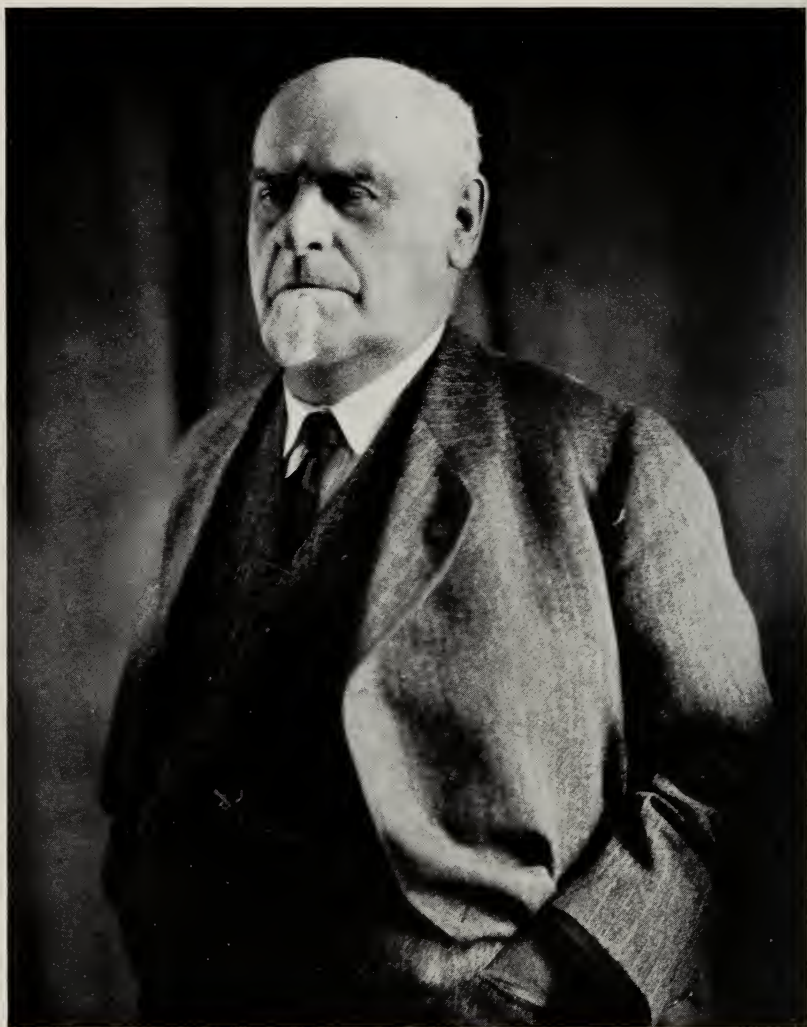


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GEORGE E. COLE  
1845-1930



# CITIZEN COLE OF CHICAGO

*By* HOYT KING

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Illinois  
Historical  
Survey

In Token of Affection

This Work Is

Dedicated

to the Memory of

George E. Cole

by

His Former Secretary

H. W. 1200

3648

G. Howe



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## P R E F A C E

**T**HIS is a story of a successful fight over years against political corruption in Chicago. It tells what was done and how it was done. It shows the permanent effect of the early years of work of George E. Cole, a little man with broad shoulders, a hard head and a bulldog jaw. Without prestige or money he led forlorn hopes to victory.

If this were a sermon the text to the reader of today might well be, "Go and do thou likewise."

HOYT KING





## FOREWORD

THE man for the hour George E. Cole was found to be when from the glory of the World's Fair of 1893 Chicago turned to face the shame of its political corruption in alliance with social evils. He was found in the ranks of minor business men and of his fellow citizens. He never thought of himself as belonging anywhere else, least of all in any leadership. Back to the ranks he always went after being called forth to lead now and again.

He lived one life — straightforward, forthright, wholehearted — at home, in business and in citizenship. This he could do because he saw life whole. Therefore his citizenship was not anything to be taken on or put off. It was always on or in the very soul of him. He was it. "George Cole, Citizen," defines him and it.

This oneness and single-sightedness of his whole life made his influence decisive. So upright and downright, yet human withal, was he, in thought, speech and act, that no one had to look or think twice to know where he stood, or wonder what he meant, or understand what he said and did. His contacts were direct, man to man. There was nothing aloof between him and those whose attitude and actions he opposed, any more than between him and his comrades. No ulterior motive, double meaning,

reserved intention, personal aim or animus could be suspected of him. There seemed to be no place for duplicity in him. This made double dealing with him very difficult. Those accustomed to it were thrown off their guard, as the man with whom they dealt stood revealed before them. Those whom he unmasked found him not to be unfriendly. Although never compromising right with wrong, he was kindly in pointing out errors in men's ways, considerate in conceding how human it is to err, and yet showing how much more manly it is to turn from self-seeking and stand for public rights and to serve the public welfare.

His deeds speak for him. Few words of his own or of others about him need to be quoted to tell the story of his acts. Thrilling it was for us to be with him at crises in the city's experience and his own, when these acts of his were like trumpet calls to united action. No one knew the motive and the meaning of what he did so well as he who makes them understood and inspiring in this tale of the man who chose Hoyt King to be at his right hand and his confidant throughout his public career. No greater heritage has been left to Chicago by any citizen than that which this book holds in trust for all to inherit who would make their own the ideals, the courage and the service which Citizen Cole exemplified. This far younger follower lets the very spirit of his old leader win, inspire and guide those who would and could be effectively active citizens.

This brief, graphic, interesting narrative is more than a memoir in being a manual of citizenship. And it is more than a manual in making citizenship more impelling by showing how a

plain man in the ranks practiced and lived it. Citizenship is not only seen but felt to be alive and at work in these pages. Chicago, in all that it has been, is, and may become, challenges its citizens to answer the categorical imperative, Who follows in the train of George E. Cole, Citizen?

GRAHAM TAYLOR



## CHAPTER I

### THE LITTLE STATIONER BECOMES THE HUMAN BZZ SAW

“**B**Y THIS time I suppose it is fair to assume that this audience is not in favor of electing aldermen who sell their votes. The next thing, I suppose, will be to call a meeting to discuss the multiplication table. It is a reflection on civilization that we have to call a meeting to stir up sentiment for honesty.” It is our sarcastic Clarence S. Darrow who is speaking.

It is the year 1896, day March 16th. Not a nice night to be out; fifteen hundred people, however, crowd Central Music Hall, corner State and Randolph Streets, Chicago. At eight o'clock Judge Murray F. Tuley, benign, white-haired and with flowing beard, has advanced to the rostrum. It was Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis' pulpit on Sunday; before that, David Swing's. Tuley is chairman of the meeting. On the platform besides the speakers are Chauncey J. Blair, Charles Bergner, Frank B. Tobey, Henry M. Bates, W. A. Sheridan, Judge Adams, W. H. Colvin, J. W. Burton, W. T. Baker, Seymour Coman, Nicolay Grevstad, Joseph Badenoch Jr., W. C. Boyden, L. C. De Praft, F. Taliaferro, C. N. Roberts, John Anderson, Robert L. Nelson, Judge Dunne and W. A. Vincent. Members of the Municipal Voters'

League executive committee are also on the platform with these merchants, lawyers, judges, labor leaders, publishers, tradesmen and bankers. The meeting is the embodiment of the spirit of Chicago.

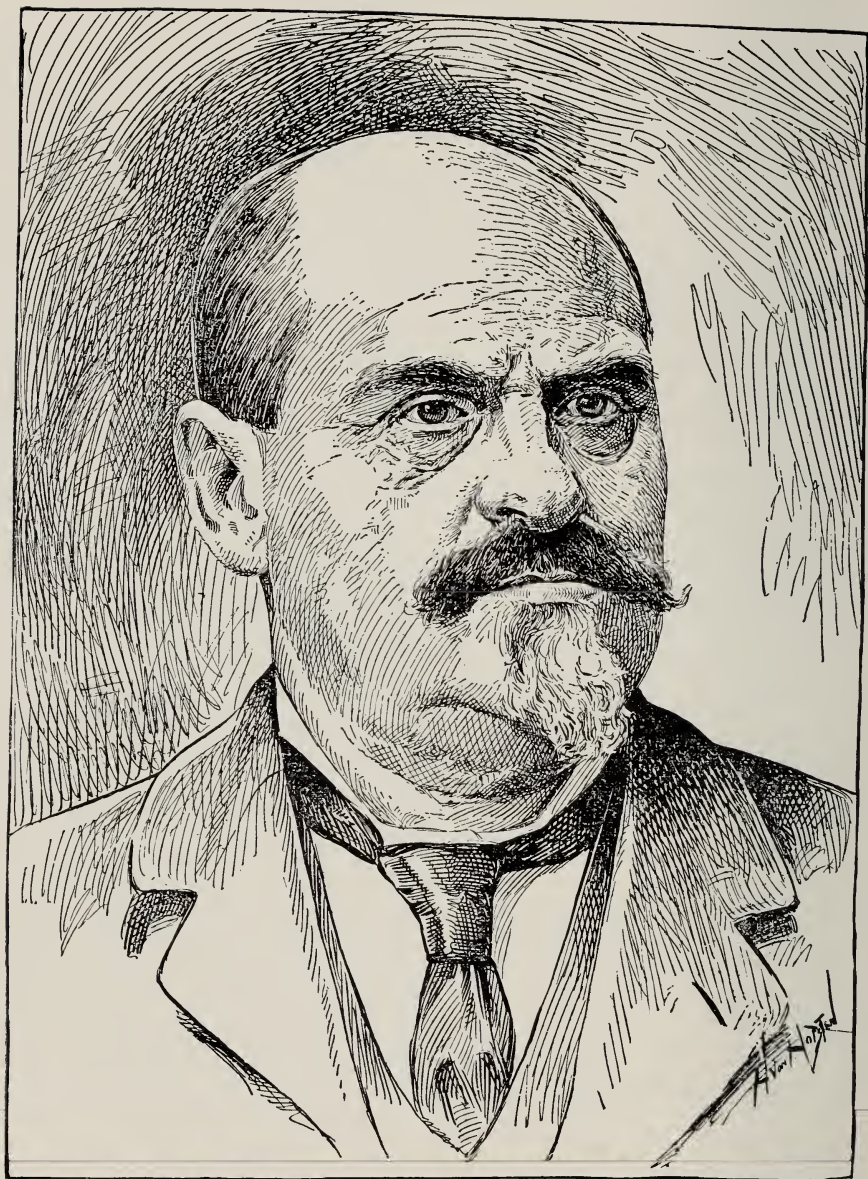
Judge Tuley's gavel had come down. He opens by saying, "We are trying to rescue the city from the band of conspirators, known as the council 'gang,' which is degrading Chicago before all the world." He quoted from the platform of the Municipal Voters' League, organized to clean out the Chicago city council, and added "The League has no machinery." Then, turning and viewing the pugnacious face and stocky form of George E. Cole, president of the League, he corrected himself. "I have said we have no machine in the League. I will take that back — we have this little sawed-off giant of reform. He is our machine, tireless and fearless. He has X-ray eyes, and can look right through a candidate and see whether he is a boodler at heart or not. Alderman Stanwood has already run up against this human buzz saw."

This was George E. Cole's first introduction to the public. He had tackled a job in which others had failed. He had tackled a job prominent men had refused as impossible of accomplishment. What this job was was revealed that night by Judge Tuley. "No city council ever before known in Chicago has attained the degradation of the present one. For willful disregard of duty, for unfaithfulness to trusts, for open and barefaced corruption, it is unparalleled in the sublimity of its infamy."

John H. Hamline, lawyer and civil service advocate, speaks. He tells a story of the historic Rhenish robber baron, and adds,







Reprint from Chicago Times-Herald, March 16, 1896

**GEORGE E. COLE**  
As the newspapers saw him in 1896



"If the shade of that baron should come to Chicago he would say of its citizens that they are not in it with the Rhenish burghers who hanged him, but the aldermen would be right in his class and men after his own soul." And this was not all he said.

Then Washington Hesting gave testimony: "If a blow for good government is ever to be struck, the time to strike is now. The thieves and boodlers have taken the alarm."

Many of this audience asked themselves, "Who is this George E. Cole who is to do the mighty task outlined?" Many who read these lines will ask it. To the present generation, George E. Cole was a man of eighty-five, young in mind, whose ripe years were happy with memories of service to the citizens of Chicago and of Illinois. A grateful acknowledgment of his long and effective public work is his merited and only reward.

He was a short man, mainly in the legs, for he had a well-developed body. If Abraham Lincoln is correctly quoted as to how long a man's legs should be, Cole's were long enough: they reached the ground. At the time of this meeting he was fifty years old. His eyes then bored right through a crooked politician. He had a decidedly bulldog jaw. It attracted the newspapermen he had to deal with. One of them said of it, "It is as awe-inspiring as the ram-bow of a ship." He wore a number eight hat on a hard head, set on broad shoulders.

Previous to 1896 he had little history, at least none that stood out in his own memory. Old residents of Jackson, Michigan, admit that he was born there. It happened on March 2, 1845. So far as can be learned, like the average boy, he attended school,

milked the cow, worked in the garden, and sawed wood, because he had to. He admits he dodged these chores when he could. He might have been at the old swimming hole sometimes when the school bell was vainly calling him.

But when the Civil War was calling him he listened. It was calling able-bodied men, not boys. He was sixteen. War and fighting appealed to him much more than school and work. But the country did not want its boys, especially sawed-off ones. It amused the recruiting officer when a boy only five feet high and weighing scarcely one hundred pounds offered himself. But let Cole tell his story:

"It was simply a stalemate. I couldn't go to war, and I wouldn't do anything else. This condition lasted for a time, when my mother, realizing that I was simply drifting downward, consented to sign my enlistment papers, if I could get any one to accept me. I was not long in finding my man in Lieutenant Welling of the Tenth Michigan Infantry (then home on a furlough), who agreed to accept me, provided I could pass an examination by the surgeon in charge of the state recruiting office, in Jackson. I applied at once to Dr. Chittuck, who made it a condition that I must get a letter from either my father or mother, both of whom he knew personally. It happened, fortunately for my desire, that my father, who had steadily opposed my enlisting and blocked me once after I had nearly succeeded, was out of town. My mother, more wise in that she would rather have me go to the front and face the possibility of death than have me drop to the rear and become a mere flotsam and jetsam, at once

wrote to the doctor expressing the hope that he could pass me. I was subjected to a most critical test, at the end of which the doctor remarked, 'Well, George, you are about as big as a pint of cider, but as far as you go you are the most perfect specimen I have examined in three years and I will pass you.'

"Two things happened when I joined the regiment which rather jarred me at the time, but I look back on them now with amusement. The first was the remark of a big veteran who, after looking me over with a half frown, half smile on his face, remarked, 'Well, the war must be about over when they get to sending us babies from Michigan.' The other event was my first and only drill. The sergeant spent about an hour in futile endeavor to get me to load one of the old Springfield rifles according to regulations. When I could not do so, because I could not reach high enough, he exclaimed in disgust, 'I do not propose to waste my time trying to teach you. It can't be done according to tactics. I will just put you in the ranks between two old soldiers and you can imitate them the best you can.'

"I served all through the Atlanta campaign, marched to the sea with General Sherman, followed him through the Carolinas and through Richmond, marched in the review of his army at Washington, and was finally mustered out at Louisville in August, 1865, having drilled but the short time mentioned.

"I came out of the army at the age of twenty, with no technical education or occupation, to find my father a prematurely old, broken-down man, having failed in business and lost everything. The only thing to do was to start again in a new town, and

for three years I kept the pot boiling as a common day laborer, because I found nothing else to do. It seemed a little hard at the time, but I have had reason to be mighty thankful for that experience. I learned two things: first, that no honest labor is or can be degrading; second, that the men I saw seemingly at the bottom of the ladder are generally just as intelligent, patriotic and independent as any apparently more favored class. Whenever I hear people talk of a few leaders swinging the labor vote to this or that man, I smile to myself. I know better. You may as well talk about swinging the lawyers' vote or the ministers' vote or the doctors' vote. The average laboring man does his own thinking and voting just as thoroughly as the professional man, and just as intelligently."

In 1868 George Cole came to Chicago. His uncle offered him a position in his carpet store. For the next twenty-seven years he strove to make a living. He built up the business of George E. Cole & Company, stationers and printers, after leaving his uncle's employ. He was, at the age of fifty, a moderately successful man. "I worked out from under the burden of poverty, and was not cursed with the burden of riches," said Cole, and added:

"He who has no money is poor;  
He who has nothing but money is a pauper."

He had achieved success in his business and could now at least furnish comforts and some luxuries to his family. He had married Lois T. Milnes of Chicago on June 20, 1878, and now had two boys.

## CHAPTER II

### DIPS INTO WARD POLITICS

THIS was Cole's history up to 1894, and then he began to "sit up and take notice." He had discharged his obligation to his family. They were cared for. "But," said he, "it did not take much looking around to show me that I owed a debt to the community. I had voted more or less independently, but that was all — just about what the great majority of our citizens do. Mine was not the sin of commission, but of omission, of indifference, of laziness, if you please. I was of the eighty-five per cent who were interested in honest, economical government, but not actively so. Opposed to the indifferent eighty-five per cent, there were then, and there are now, the payroll, their families and friends, the merchants and contractors interested in public contracts, the criminals and those interested in being protected in unlawful pursuits. These probably do not exceed fifteen per cent. This fifteen per cent is permitted to dominate the eighty-five per cent. It is bound together by self-interest. These are not all corrupt, but, with the lack of independent support, the honest ones close their eyes to the corruption of the dishonest. So municipal government was in a bad way in 1894."



Cole began to learn. During the World's Fair, in 1893, William T. Stead, editor of the *Review of Reviews* in London, visited Chicago. He delivered some fiery speeches and wrote a book, "If Christ Came to Chicago." Out of his visit was born the Civic Federation of Chicago, with Lyman J. Gage (afterwards secretary of the treasury under President McKinley) as president.

The Federation formed branches in many of the thirty-four wards of Chicago, and Cole received notice to attend in his neighborhood, the Fourth Ward. He was elected president of the Fourth Ward Council.

The wards were in filthy condition. The downtown streets were no better than pig wallows. In mild weather the slush at some corners was ankle deep. Horse droppings, accumulating during the winter, piled up in the gutters and overflowed the curb. In its campaign for street cleaning and garbage removal the Civic Federation undertook, by private subscription, to clean the downtown streets and alleys. Under direction of Harry G. Selfridge, General Joseph Stockton and J. W. Brooks, appointed for the purpose, the streets and alleys were cleaned up and kept clean. Two hundred and fifty sheet-iron receptacles for waste paper were planted. Seventy-five men were steadily employed with carts and brooms.

The ward councils were also at work. Cole found himself trying to clean streets in the ward and dispose of garbage. Between times he held meetings to talk about "the city beautiful." A women's auxiliary was formed, with Mrs. Cole a leading spirit. The women campaigned against uncleanness with such effect that

citizens were ashamed to throw their waste material in public places. Through their activity and watchfulness, the women secured the removal of the ward inspector — a saloonkeeper, appointed by the alderman, who drew pay without rendering any service.

"It seemed at last a false start," said Mr. Cole. The Federation council was trying to cure the evils of local government by doing the public work. Cole thought this was about as sensible as "trying to cure consumption by poulticing one's thumb." Something was wrong. The alderman of the ward had appointed the garbage inspector, and Cole and his forces were doing the inspector's work. So, after repeated failures to interest this alderman in reforming his inspector, the inspector's removal was forced, and Cole went deeply into the study of aldermen in general. This alderman did not at the time sense the mistake he was making in ignoring an indignant citizen. Subsequently it cost him an election to the United States Senate. He was Martin B. Madden. Cole found him to be an able and influential leader of the "gang" in the city council. Cole had voted for him twice.

Cole said, "I found the local government rotten to the core. The city council was owned by one man, a Napoleon of fraud and chicanery, Charles T. Yerkes." Yerkes had a more or less firm grip on all the administrative departments. The question "What are you going to do about it?" was thrown at Cole so frequently that he took it seriously. When he talked about organizing an opposition to Madden's re-election, he was told, "It's no use." Then the bulldog in Cole began to assert itself.

## CHAPTER III

### SUPPORTS WALKER AGAINST ALDERMAN MADDEN

COLE at once determined to fight Madden and decided that there was no use appealing to the republican primaries. Very few independent citizens paid any attention to the primary. Those who voted were mostly the precinct workers and their friends, and others who received or expected favors of the alderman and the assessor. Those who voted against the "organization" thought they could look for little consideration at the hands of the assessor.

The archaic personal property law was on the statutes then, as it is now. The old township, since abolished, elected a supervisor, a collector, an assessor and a clerk. This body made the assessments and collected the tax. To avoid false swearing a citizen was expected under the law to list all the personal property he owned on April 1 — furniture, savings, bank account, money due him on notes, mortgages, bonds, etc. — and after deducting his debts, pay on one-half the actual value the same rate of tax he paid on his home or real estate. At times the tax would amount to five per cent on savings that earned only three per cent. So tax payers perjured themselves to get justice. When a tax payer



did that, he had to walk circumspectly. He could not fight crooks who knew he was vulnerable. Anyway, as a voter could not then and has not yet been able to get the law changed, he overcame conscientious scruples and laid himself open to servility. So the republican primary belonged to Madden and his friends. Tradesmen and property owners generally stayed away from the primary.

Primaries then elected delegates to the ward convention. The convention system was in line with the spirit of the constitution which created, not a democracy, but a representative form of government. In theory, able minds would meet in convention and use good judgment in nominating party candidates. In practice, delegates were a grade above the ordinary ward workers. Some of the best workers were honored. Sometimes a local business man was flattered and made tractable by selection as a delegate. The convention theory was good, but lack of popular interest made it not workable.

Originally, primaries for the nomination of delegates were entirely a matter of party arrangement. Then party machines were built up that deprived the opposition within a party of any rights at a primary. In 1889 the law stepped in. Before this, the primary election that selected delegates, that named the candidate dictated by the leader, practically worked like this: The average voter appeared at the primary polling place, if he could find it, and took a printed ballot handed him by a man he did not know. This ballot he poked through a window or the crack of a door to a political worker. If he poked in a ballot of his own, or an opposition ballot, he had no means of knowing what happened

to it. This system prevailed for some time after the law of 1889. Under that law the county central committee could elect to proceed under the new primary act, fix and publish the time to hold the primary, select the judges and clerks from the regular election lists (their own previous selection), group precincts into primary districts of not more than nine hundred voters, and designate the polling places. The new law provided for challengers who could raise a question as to a voter's right to vote and for watchers who could oversee and insist on an honest count.

The ballot or ticket of delegates must be printed on "white, common print" paper, 3½ by 6 inches. There is a great difference in quality of white, common print paper. How many of these ballots were "the other fellow's" was no secret to the judges handling them. Word could easily pass out to the workers, if a few more votes were needed to keep the organization's lead. So the opposition still had this handicap, only overcome by heavy voting. Heavy voting is unusual in a primary fight.

It was under this system that the Civic Federation through its ward councils undertook to secure honest judges and clerks, the location of polls in accessible places, and police protection at the polls. The ward councils were to see that watchers and challengers were at the polls. The councils were to put up good men as independent candidates for aldermen where none fit were nominated by the parties.

Cole's "mad" was up. He took conditions in his ward as he found them. He began to agitate the question of organizing an opposition to the alderman. He was told, "It is impossible to

defeat him and will only make us ridiculous." No, not by every one. "When I reached my neighbor Frank Wells," says Mr. Cole, "I found a *man*, one of the most lovable and gentle characters that I ever knew. He dared to do right and fight for truth as he saw it."

With Wells' help, Cole turned to the democrats, who had never carried the ward. They were glad to use their machinery for any democrat who might appeal to the independent vote. Cole, Wells, John T. Richards and the democrats agreed upon Francis W. Walker, lawyer, who had achieved a reputation, as assistant to State's Attorney Grinnel, in the prosecution of the so-called anarchists held guilty of inciting the Haymarket Riot that resulted in the death of several policemen.

Walker had also prosecuted the county boodlers in 1887, on evidence that grew out of the discovery by J. Frank Aldrich, then county commissioner and later congressman, of some unpaid and padded county bills. The county institutions were controlled by notorious gamblers, whose bills, padded from fifty to one hundred per cent, were approved by the county board. Also, sums ranging from \$500 to \$1300 were paid for votes on lighting, printing, coal, meat and other contracts. Bills included costly and unique furniture, table luxuries and elegant rugs that went into private homes. Grinnel and his assistant, Walker, convicted McGarigle, McDonald, Van Pelt, Big Dan Wren, Varnell and McClaughry, commissioners and county officials.

Walker was nominated for alderman, a stiff fight was put up, and Cole won his first defeat. He called it that, because Madden

was elected by a much reduced majority and the ward became debatable ground. Cole said to Wells, "We can lose a battle and not a war." He was not then conscious that in enlisting in that battle he was enlisting in a thirty years' war.

## CHAPTER IV

### SELECTED FOR PRESIDENT MUNICIPAL VOTERS' LEAGUE

MOST of the other wards had organized and had attempted to elect better aldermen. In this they were supported by the Civic Federation, and, except in one or two instances, their candidates were defeated. President Gage and Secretary Easley and their associates were convinced that to succeed the movement must be broadened. They invited all the clubs and organizations that might possibly be interested to meet in conference. At this meeting as many plans were suggested as there were speakers. One influential and patriotic citizen urged at length that an entirely new party be formed devoted to civic purity. He acknowledged that it might not succeed at first, but that, if it remained true to its ideals, its efforts would be crowned with ultimate success and would usher in a "civic millennium." Another equally prominent and sincere delegate argued that the calling of this conference was a mistake — that if good citizens would join their ward and precinct partisan clubs all would go well. Between these two extremes all sorts of "isms" found their advocates, and chaos reigned. After hours of wrangling, some of the cooler heads, to avoid disintegration, put through a resolution authorizing the

chairman to appoint a committee of fifteen to report a plan. This committee appointed a committee of one hundred, two from each of the thirty-four wards, and thirty-two at large. This committee in turn named a second committee of fifteen, to form a plan and nominate officers to carry on a campaign.

Mr. Cole said he looked upon the movement as one of those flashes in the pan that so often occur in local affairs. These preliminaries had consumed the fall of 1895 and had run into February, 1896. Then, on Lincoln's birthday, about 4 P. M., as Mr. Cole was just closing his desk for the day, the telephone bell rang. He received a request to come to the Federation's headquarters to meet Mr. William T. Baker, who had succeeded Mr. Gage as president. When he arrived, Mr. Baker merely said, "Follow me," and conducted him across the hall to the office of Edwin Burritt Smith, where the committee of fifteen was in meeting. He was offered a seat and, still mystified, sat down. Mr. Gage, the chairman of the committee, opened by saying, "As you probably know, Mr. Cole, this committee is charged with the duty of nominating officers and presenting a plan of operation to the committee of one hundred, and, after full deliberation, we have unanimously decided to offer the presidency to you." Mr. Cole was quick to grasp the situation. We will quote him: "I saw the whole thing in an instant. They had been together for hours and days, trying to hit upon a leader, and failed. One man has refused the task; another was too old or too lazy; still another couldn't stand the criticism which was sure to follow; and so on. As a last resort they took up the names of the committee of one



hundred, man after man, and in some way stumbled on my name. In a moment of desperation they had agreed to offer me the place and 'save their face.' I said to them: 'Gentlemen, you have not named me as your first, second or third choice; it is merely "Hobson's choice." But I made up my mind over a year ago that I would act the coward's part no longer, and would assume whatever civic duty came to me unsought. I will accept the appointment, as the leader of a forlorn hope, *on condition* that I am to name the secretary and the executive committee, and am given full authority to run things to suit myself. You are to furnish \$10,000 and I am not to know who contributes.' " Cole spent less than \$7,000. "In fact, as one of them afterward told me, they were but too glad to be pulled out of the hole so easily. I went immediately home from that conference, into my room and locked the door and reviewed the situation alone with my conscience and my God."

This was the situation in Cole's mind. On the one side was an intrenched camp of experienced and able political freebooters, supported by financial, social and moral interests, relying on the indifference, the laziness and the ignorance of the people; on the other side was a man without prestige, experience or peculiar adaptability to the work in hand. The solution in Cole's mind, and the only road to success, lay in arousing the people. He had a firm conviction that if they were once made to understand the issue, the honest men, who are vastly in the majority, would win the victories.

## CHAPTER V

### ORGANIZES LEAGUE TO WAR ON YERKES COUNCIL

**T**wo days later, on Saint Valentine's Day, the newspapers announced, "The Fourth Ward man is chosen unanimously as president of the new municipal reform movement." Seventy-five members of the committee of one hundred had met at the Palmer House the day before, and Cole had accepted the presidency in a speech about as long as he ever made. We can quote it in full:

"I will try and try hard to make this movement a success. I realize that we are enlisting in a war which will last until every scoundrel is turned out of the city hall and honest men get their due. I have no friends to reward and no enemies to punish. Every honest man is my friend and every dishonest one my enemy, no matter how high his position. But we have a hard fight before us. The strength of the machine arrayed against us lies in its unity. No matter what personal differences the members may have, they band together and present a solid front to the foe. Let us, therefore, exercise the same self-control as they, and no matter what our individual views may be, unite on the common ground of 'one for all and all for one.'"



Mr. Gage summed up these requirements of a leader: that he should be devoted, pure, honest, without political ambition, possessed of some leisure, courage, industry, patience, and ability to take a good deal of calumny — a pretty large order, and, unfortunately, a rare combination. It remained to be seen whether Cole filled the bill.

The next morning Cole came down to business an hour or two earlier than usual, and cleaned up his desk with a view to practically abandoning business for the time being. He had hardly finished his mail before William H. Colvin, one of the committee of fifteen, came in to express his gratification. Cole tells the incident this way: "Before he finished his story I had made up my mind that he must be one of the campaign committee of nine, and I said to him, 'That is all right, Mr. Colvin. I fully appreciate your kindly talk, and the motives that brought you here, but actions speak louder than words. You have helped me get into this scrape, and now I am going to retaliate by appointing you a member of the executive committee. I propose, as soon as we get organized, to call a meeting every afternoon at three o'clock, during six days of the week, until the election is over. You are a man of substance and leisure, and have enthusiasm for the work at hand. I want to utilize all of these qualities.' He replied, 'Well, Mr. Cole, I have arranged to take my daughters to California this spring, and, in fact, we have already begun preparations.' I said, 'That is all right, but this whole campaign is a matter of self-abnegation, and here is a chance for you to pay your debt to the community in which you made your success.' He thought for

a minute, and then he said, 'I will go home and ask my daughters to excuse me. If they consent I will be at your disposal, and will give you your answer this afternoon.' He did give his answer, and it was in the affirmative, and from that time until after the election he was a strong and positive factor in all our doings. A few weeks after the election was over I heard of his sudden death, and I have wondered many times since if the work and worry he gave to the campaign did not hasten his departure to the other shore. I can get no answer to the question now, but I expect to meet him there some day and that is the first question I propose to ask.

"Immediately after my conversation with Mr. Colvin, I went over to the office of my friend Frank Wells, told him what I proposed to do, and said, 'Frank, I want you to go on the executive committee and help me.' He said, 'George, I am a pretty busy man and would like very much to be excused.' I said, 'That won't go. I must have you, and I appeal to you as a matter of duty. I don't pretend for a moment that there is not a lot of hard work and worry and trouble connected with it, but I had you in mind as the first man to approach.' He said, 'All right, if you put it that way, I am at your disposal.' I then proceeded to the office of Hoyt King and secured his consent to act as secretary.

"From there, I sought out Edwin Burritt Smith and James L. Houghteling, who were, at that time, somewhat closely connected in business, and said to them, 'Gentlemen, I haven't quite nerve enough to ask you both to go on the executive committee and to abandon your business for half the time for the next six

weeks. But I do expect that one of you will accept such an appointment, and you can settle between yourselves as to which one it shall be.' The result was that Mr. Smith consented to become a member of the executive committee, and Mr. Houghteling, not giving this as an excuse for non-action, accepted the onerous position of chairman of the finance committee. A great deal of the early success of the League was owing to his able, disinterested and energetic efforts in that capacity.

"By this time the shades of evening had fallen, and I went home with three members of the executive committee and a secretary as a result of the first day's work. With this as a nucleus, I started out next morning to find headquarters. It happened that a private banking office opposite the city hall had just been vacated, and with Mr. Wells' help we got permission from the Potwin Estate to move in until May 1st, unless the place should be rented before then.

"Having thus succeeded in procuring headquarters without money, I started out to get furniture on the same liberal basis. I called on my old friend Frank Tobey, told him what I was trying to do, and asked him for the loan of such furniture as was necessary to furnish the office, which was to be returned May 1st. He said, 'All right, Cole, I will gladly let you have the furniture, and I hope you will succeed beyond your expectations, but I have my doubts. This thing has been tried before and has never amounted to anything but a flash in the pan, and I have become skeptical of all movements of this kind.' I said, 'That is all right, but I know that you will be enthusiastic on the other line before

we get through.' This remark has been vindicated in many subsequent conversations with my friend Tobey.

"I still had four members of the executive committee to pick before we were ready to open headquarters. The next man I tackled was an old printer friend of mine, who had been a labor leader, and was then an editorial writer on a trade paper, Mr. M. J. Carroll. I went for him in the same way I had the others, and he reluctantly consented. I then tackled another friend, R. R. Donnelley, president of one of our largest printing and publishing companies. I called on him at his house. We went into the library, and I told him the whole story — how I came to be and what I hoped to do. I said, 'Now, Donnelley, I want you to jump into the ring and hold up my hands.' 'Well, George, I'm getting along in years and am a pretty busy man, and I don't feel that I could afford to give the time.' 'That would be all right,' I said, 'if I were asking you to attend some combination for pleasure or money making. Then I would accept that as an excuse. But here is a fight to the finish. I have got to have men that I can bet on, and I know I can bet on you, and I need you. I appeal to your sense of duty as a citizen.' He thought for a few moments, and then said, 'You put it in a way that obliges me to say yes.'

"I had as a result of three days' work found headquarters and furnished them; had a secretary, a finance chairman, and five strong men to act on the executive committee, making seven in all, including the president and the secretary. There I paused. I thought of several men whom I would have liked on the committee, but who, for various reasons, either could not or would

not accept. The next day I opened up the office with the committee of seven, and the whole campaign was run with that number only. I will add in this connection that all of these men, except the president and the secretary, have departed this life full of honor. I am sure they were all received with 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many.' "

Edwin Burritt Smith acted both as legal counsel and literary editor of the organization. All matters for publication, if not originated by him, passed through his hands. He was an adept at brevity of expression. Allen B. Pond was an assistant headquarters man. Later Graham Taylor, added to the committee, was busy with northwest side wards. Colvin, Wells, Carroll and Donnelley were present at daily sessions with helpful advice and backing.

Judge Tuley's interest in the League movement was intense and his advice and judgment were sought, freely given and gratefully accepted. Judge Tuley, on the bench of the Circuit Court since 1879, had been a soldier from Illinois in the Mexican War. When New Mexico became a part of this country, Tuley remained in Santa Fe, practiced law and became attorney general of the territory and a member of the legislature. Later, in Chicago, he was a partner of Joseph E. Gary. They became associates on the bench. So Tuley was a man of wide experience.

William Kent was frequently present and swung a vicious pen. Later in the season he was to be defendant in a hundred thousand dollar libel suit on account of his literary work in the



legislative campaign. He favored Joseph Powell, independent republican in his district, and Powell was elected. Kent's lambasting of Powell's opponent included seven different charges, serious and specific. Some of the misdoings quoted were of a criminal nature. Kent pleaded the facts, provable facts, and the suit fell flat.







Reprint from Chicago Times-Herald, March 30, 1896

## A BADLY MARKED LITTER

## CHAPTER VI

### COUNCIL A MARKET FOR FRANCHISES

THE people had heretofore picked aldermen for the Yerkes council as democrats and as republicans. Breaking down party lines was the task imposed on the League. The tariff and free silver were national party issues. Voters were "yellow dog" republicans and straight-laced democrats. A yellow dog republican was one who boasted he would sooner vote for a yellow dog than vote for a democrat. Would they break party lines to vote against crooked aldermen, running under their party labels? A hint came from old Arthur Dixon, long an alderman from the first ward, but retired — an out-and-out republican party man. This from him: "Party lines in the Council? Why, party lines in the Council are a joke!" This was encouraging. It would be unfortunate to have to wipe out parties. This was not attempted. The plan was to wipe out party fealty so far as aldermen were concerned, and pick the best man. Where neither party put up a good man, independents were to be encouraged to run by petition.

The investigation disclosed that the City Council was a market for the sale to corporations of rights in the streets, over them and under them, with no adequate compensation to the city. Charles

T. Yerkes had come to Chicago in 1884. He was from Philadelphia, where he passed through being bookkeeper, cashier, note broker, up to banking and dealing in municipal securities. In the depression of '71, he used public funds to try to tide himself over. He failed, and his indictment for diverting public funds followed. Subsequently he bought into the street railways there and profited. It was in 1884 that, having established a branch bank in Chicago, he purchased a majority of the stock in the North Chicago Street Railroad Company, and a year later in the west side lines. In 1895 he had changed to electric power and turned his attention to elevated railways. And then this little stationer turns up, with no experience and no money, to oppose him. Yerkes had brains, long experience, money, and no conscience. He had built up a complete control of the Council, fixing a market value for votes. Other corporations fell in line.

When sales to these corporations were slow, the aldermen granted rights to mushroom concerns — “born in mystery and cradled in seclusion,” the newspaper said. They were organized to secure rights to sell out to existing rivals. Street, elevated and underground railways, gas and electric companies, compressed-air and smoke-abating companies were among the beneficiaries. Public subscription was cleaning the streets, and the Council was giving them away. Amendments by the minority to protect the public were ruthlessly defeated. Vetoes by the mayor were overridden. All these motions and votes made records showing clearly where the aldermen stood. It was necessary to refresh and clarify the minds of the voters. There was no way of getting around these records.

And Cole was calling for facts, facts, facts. Money was needed sometimes and not on hand. Cole went ahead. "The ravens will feed us" was his comforting assurance. "Take nothing for granted" was his political maxim. "Let's get down to brass tacks" was a daily salutation from Cole to his headquarters men. They soon learned that a caller was not necessarily honest because he was well dressed. That eye of Cole's was boring through every tricky caller who came to mislead the League. "Don't like his weak mouth" or "He has a shifty eye" decided a man's fate with Cole. "I think" and "I guess" were taboo at headquarters. To go off half-cocked came to be regarded as a grave infraction of the law of the League, and over all was injected the firm belief that "God helps those who fight like the devil." One thing more: Cole distinguished a gangster in public affairs from a politician. He himself was soon to be a good politician.

It seemed to dawn on the enemy that this man Cole could not be cajoled or deceived; so they searched his record, which wasn't much of a record. One day a *Chronicle* man dropped in to ask Mr. Cole if he had ever served time at Leavenworth penitentiary. Evidently some man of the same name had. But Cole had not served in any penitentiary — had never even been in jail. So that lead fell flat.

The newspaper men liked this new kind of reform body. They sized up Cole and liked his slogans and his action. They bided their time to see how pulls and politics would be side-stepped by this reformer. Did his expression "No friends to reward and no enemies to punish" mean anything? Here was a new kind of



reformer, not rich, not well known, with no record to speak of. Was he vulnerable? Was there a flaw to be dug up in his past life — some weak or dishonest act? Was he self-interested? Would he be subservient to wily politicians or big business?

Daily visitors were Malcolm McDowell of the *Record*, now Secretary of the Indian Commission in Washington, but at that time political reporter and a source of invaluable information and guidance; Ed Lahiff of the *Herald* and afterwards secretary to the mayor, who later went home to Ireland and died on the old home soil; John Corwin, Springfield man for the *Tribune*; Tom O'Neill of the *News*; and Hi Fargo and Elton Lower of the *Post*. John Lane dropped in once in a while for the *Inter-Ocean*, and Florence Sullivan for the *Chronicle*. When the campaign provoked an editorial comment, William (Billy) Hard of the *Tribune* and George C. Sikes of the *Record* (crack writers) called.

Peter Finley Dunne, of "Dooley" fame, would drop in to find William Kent and tour the saloon districts with him. They enjoyed the consternation growing in the wicked wards and came back to report, jubilant but fagged. William Kent, later to move to California and become a congressman, had been elected to the Council in 1895. He was the son of Albert E. Kent, one of the early packers. Young Kent was a graduate of Yale. He inherited real estate in Chicago and cattle ranches in the west. He spent much leisure in hunting and was reputed to be a crack shot. Perhaps his association with western characters was responsible for the fearlessness he displayed in public life. Having a competent agent handling the Chicago holdings, and a fellow classmate han-

dling the Nebraska cattle ranch, he became a militant figure in Chicago politics. In his ward James R. Mann, later congressman, was alderman. In 1894 Mann was a candidate for renomination. Primaries were rough affairs even in staid Hyde Park. They were conducted in the old-fashioned way that has been described earlier in this work. They were determined by physical force. Kent, who favored Mann and did not like his opponent, determined to carry his district for Mann. He got the support of some athletic classmates and hired some prize fighters. They were present at the polling place. Kent already had the votes, and it is said everything was peaceful in his district on primary day. His votes were received and counted and the district was carried for Mann.

Mann thought young Kent would be an excellent colleague; so he brought him out the following year for alderman. Kent was elected and became a thorn in the flesh of crooked aldermen. Without a strong voice, but with an art for good-natured abuse, he voiced his sentiments on every boodle ordinance. He became sincerely disliked, but he was respected by his many wayward colleagues. His knowledge and experience were valuable to the League and were enthusiastically given.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE STANWOOD INCIDENT

THINGS waxed warm. Round robins became Cole's almost daily diet. Among the many comebacks from a record printed, signed and circulated in a ward, was this letter addressed to George E. Cole, Esq., President of the Municipal League. One paragraph is enough. "I have known Alderman Stanwood for some time, and I have no hesitancy in saying that he is one of the best aldermen in the city, and should you take the trouble to see him and talk with him you will find that in every instance where he is charged with having voted for a so-called boodle ordinance it was not done corruptly but for the purpose of securing votes for some meritorious measure that would benefit the whole people." This letter was signed by Joseph Downey, then Commissioner of Public Works, and its sentiments were supported by the signatures of three judges and five men of high standing and large business interests in the city.

Mr. Cole, who had previously been interviewed by the pastor and two members of Stanwood's church, had asked them to put their objections to the Stanwood report in writing. This letter was the result. After conferring with the full committee of the



League, Cole sent a reply to Hon. Joseph E. Downey et al. One paragraph of this also is enough: "We regard this defense of Mr. Stanwood, which is put forth by men of your standing, as painful evidence of the low standard by which the public conduct of city officials has come to be measured by even good citizens. Gentlemen, has it not occurred to you that the defense which you suggest — that he gave his vote for corrupt measures, in exchange for meritorious ones — is a defense which is equally available to the most notorious boodler in the Council?"

The remonstrance and the answer were published. They were also printed and circulated in Mr. Stanwood's ward. He was defeated.

There were other objections voiced against Cole's records. One record he never published. The candidate, a bank director, owned a building rented to a gambling club. This man was notified that unless he withdrew, Cole would be compelled to publish the information as the League's ground for opposing him. He withdrew, but not until the efforts of the president of one of Chicago's great banks and other "prominent" citizens failed to move Mr. Cole. He said, "I would not back my own brother under the circumstances." This was a safe statement: he had no brother.

## CHAPTER VIII

### BATHHOUSE JOHN PROTESTS

THE First Ward came in to protest. Justin Smith in his book "Chicago" mentions the incident. Elaborated, it occurred like this: Mr. Cole and his secretary were alone at headquarters. It was the close of day. No one was expected when in walked a long man and a short man. Every murder in those days involved a long man and a short man. This is mentioned to emphasize the solemnity of the occasion. The secretary knew the long man. Cole knew neither. Cole was behind the counter of the old banking room. On the raised floor inside he could lean on the counter. The tall man towered over it. The short man's eyes just about reached its level. The tall man said:

"Mr. Cole, I am John J. Coughlin." (Bathhouse John.)

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Coughlin."

"This is my friend, Michael Kenna." (Hinky Dink.)

"How do you do, Mr. Kenna."

"Now, Mr. Cole, I have come to see you as man to man, to say you have done me a very great injustice in your report."

Mr. Cole is handed a printed copy of record. Cole reads: "Proprietor, turkish bath establishment; owner of Silver Dollar

saloon; voted for nearly every questionable measure that has come before the Council; supported Metropolitan Gas, Cosmopolitan Electric, Ogden Gas, General Electric, Calumet and Blue Island; with exception of Ogden Gas, voted to pass all over mayor's veto."

"Yes, Mr. Coughlin, if we have made any mistake we will be glad to correct it. Our records show you voted for all these questionable ordinances."

"That is not the point, Mr. Cole. In this record you say I was born in Waukegan. Now, Mr. Cole, I was born right here in Chicago, and I am proud of it."

Of course, the correction was made next day in the newspapers as requested.

## CHAPTER IX

### HOW COLE PLAYED THE GAME

MR. COLE relates one instance to show what deep root the League movement had taken in a short time: "A few days after the publication of the Stanwood letters, a man of about fifty, evidently a laborer, came into headquarters. He said: 'Are you Mr. Cole?' I said, 'Yes.' 'Well, a lot of us men over in the Twenty-eighth Ward got together last night and your statement and publications were read, especially the one in which you condemn both the democratic and republican candidates in our ward. We concluded it was about time for us to do something to vindicate our manhood. We are all poor men. I, myself, work for two dollars a day and have taken a day off, while the other boys chip in to make up my loss, and I have come down to lay the case before you. We have a man living in our neighborhood who would make a good alderman. He has always been a laboring man, but has worked up by his own ability until he has an income of eight or ten dollars a day as an expert house mover. He is a natural leader of men and absolutely honest. We believe that if he could get the endorsement and financial help of your League, we could elect him.' I said, 'All right, send in your man and I

will look him over.' 'When can you see him?' 'Tomorrow afternoon, or the next day.' 'I cannot come tomorrow afternoon, but the day after tomorrow I will have him in here with the committee.' When the day arrived the committee came in and the chairman introduced Charles H. Rector. It was not many minutes before I made up my mind that all the first messenger had said about Mr. Rector was true. He was a man of strong natural ability, sound common sense and a natural leader of men, honest and a winner. I said to him, 'How much would it cost to circulate your petition, file your candidacy and make a winning campaign in your ward?' He said, 'With the work that I could do myself, and the help that my friends will give me, I think that \$250 would pay all necessary expenses.' I did a little figuring on my own hook and told him that I would give him \$400 for expenses and would send him speakers, etc. With the help of Clarence Darrow and other speakers we made the campaign, expending a little more than \$400 and winning against both the regular party candidates. Mr. Rector served several terms in the Council with credit to himself and to the benefit of his constituents."

So Cole played the game. The League was republican in one ward, independent in another, and democratic in another — anything and everything to beat boodlers and land honest men. Cole admits that he did everything for success except to lie and steal or to buy and sell votes. As he put it, "We must be willing to compromise everything but a principle, and not be afraid of being misunderstood."

## CHAPTER X

### A VICTORY IN VERSE

THE day after the election, the League and the newspapers supporting the League were jubilant. Napoleon Yerkes had met his Waterloo. No better story of the results could be told than that told by John T. McCutcheon in his cartoon in the *Record* on April 14, 1896. The picture showed a battlefield strewn with the bodies of many dead, labeled with the names of defeated aldermen. But there were, ranked up, four dejected and battle-scarred survivors with army caps at various unmilitary angles on their heads. They wore bespattered uniforms. These four survivors were Coughlin, Howell, Mulcahy and Martin. Before this squad stood John Powers with the roll of the old Council in his hand. He was calling the roll.

McCutcheon's conception of the victory was in rhyme, as follows:

Stained with battle and weak and sore,  
The "gang" men fell into line once more,  
And Johnny Powers wept aloud  
When he counted the number and votes in the crowd.  
"Oh where are Deist and Engel?" asked he;  
"Have all my soldiers deserted me?"



"They fell in battle," said Bathhouse John.  
"Their constits would stand for no more con.  
I see Tom Currier and Lammers run  
Before the gazabos fired a gun,  
But most of the boys went into the fight,  
And the way they got done was a holy sight.  
Slepika got it and Stanwood too,  
And they give Fred Rohde the old razoo.  
Watson was slewed and it give me a pain  
To see how they walloped my friend Bigane."

The brave commander dropped a tear,  
And remarked, "I don't see Mahoney here,  
Or Brachtendorf, who voted right;  
Did he get lost in the thick of the fight?"  
Then Charley Martin replied, "W'y, boss,  
They give old Brach the doublecross;  
We can't find Ehlert anywhere,  
And I see Henry Schendorf go up in the air."  
"But Maurice O'Connor," the captain cried,  
"The scrapper who was our joy and pride;  
Surely he didn't go down in defeat?"  
Said Howell, "They jumped on him with both feet,  
And little Mike Ryan was slaughtered too,  
While Merchant got scared and then he flew."

"Where's Colvin, then? Didn't some one say  
That he was coming to save the day?"  
John Coughlin answered, "W'y, boss, that man,  
He wasn't even an 'also ran.'"  
Then the captain exclaimed in loud dismay:  
"Oh comrades, this is a tough, tough, day,



With Chapman and Chadwick not to be seen,  
And Ackerman lost in the vast tureen;  
And even Larson, that statesman bold,  
Who always voted the way he was told,  
Has disappeared from the public view  
And will be no more help to me and you."  
So of all the "gang" the valiant five  
Were the only ones reported alive.

There were other rhymsters. Rabbi Hirsch for the Third Ward offered this effusion:

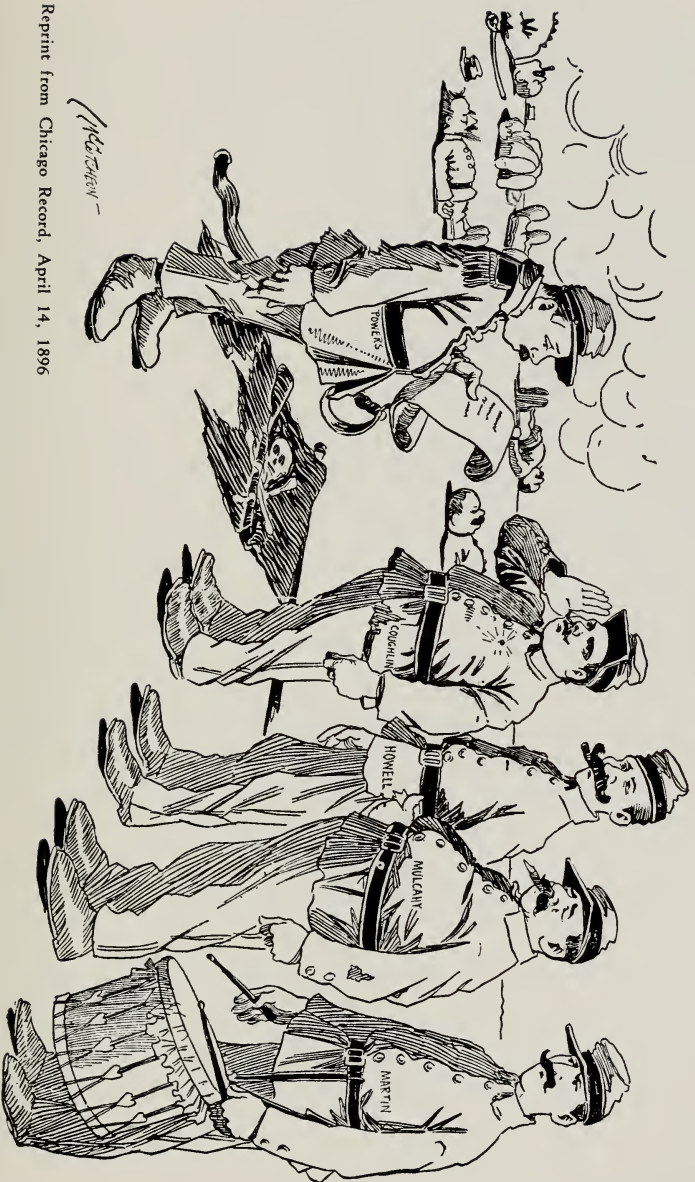
Things have gone without a hitch;  
Hull and Fisher are in the ditch;  
Our Alderman is Henry Fitch.

Fitch won as an independent.

The *News* next day said, "Enshrouded by cigarette smoke, laid out in blocks of ice and transported to its grave by the street railway corporations of Chicago, the most unworthy City Council the city has yet suffered from will be indecently interred tonight."

In the afternoon, Judge Tuley came into headquarters, calm, happy. He cautioned the members of the executive committee against being overexultant. A mass meeting to exploit their success had been suggested, but was abandoned on advice of Tuley. A little dinner of jollification was held at the old University Club rooms, where Kent, Harlan and such as would, relieved their minds by spellbinding.

Editorials in the press demanded the continuation of the League. The name, Municipal Voters' League, adopted rather offhand, was now a name of value. "Municipal" was a mouthful



Reprint from Chicago Record, April 14, 1896

## THE ROLL-CALL AFTER THE BATTLE



for many of the gang; "mu-ni-cip'i-al," with emphasis on the third syllable, was the best they could do. The value of the name was recognized by Johnnie Rogers, saloonkeeper, with occasional gambling privileges. He was a candidate in the old Eighteenth Ward, along West Madison Street, and he successfully used the name against his opponent William F. Mahoney, also a saloonkeeper with a bad Council record. In the terse language of the League and signed Municipal Voters' League (a very good imitation indeed) Johnnie set out the disqualifications of his opponent Mahoney and defeated him.

When some of these imitations of their style of literature fell into the hands of League officials there was much resentment that such a character as Johnnie Rogers could be so bold. Counsel for the League, Edwin Burritt Smith, was consulted. He deemed it necessary to get proof of publication. Mr. Cole called upon Melville E. Stone, then local manager in Chicago for the Associated Press, and asked advice. Stone thought the way to get proof was to go where it was and get it. He paused a moment and said: "I'll tell you a story. When I was on the *News*, I was much interested in the glorious display of expensive fireworks shot off in honor of Carter Harrison Senior's return from his trip around the world. I believed, and many with me, that Carter bought and paid for the fireworks shot off in his honor. I figured he would buy them at Spalding's. So I called in a young reporter and told him to go over to Spalding's, walk up to the cashier's cage and, without misrepresentation but with an air of authority, ask for Carter Harrison's bill for fireworks. He did. The cashier

turned to a ledger, made out the bill and handed it to him. I printed it that evening."

Cole got the idea. He sent to Johnnie Rogers' saloon an emissary who walked up to the bar and ordered a glass of beer. Not knowing what to do with it he drank it, and then tossing on the bar a card of a printing company (not Cole & Company), he casually remarked, "I see Mr. Rogers has a lot of printing and I would like to get some of it."

"Well, you'll have to see Mr. Rogers."

"Who does his campaign printing?"

The bartender told him and he walked out. It would have been simple to have verified by the printer that Rogers ordered the circular, but the case ended abruptly. Counsel found the League had no right to its name. So the League incorporated.

## CHAPTER XI

### BACKBONE OF THE GANG BROKEN

THE Waterloo cracked but did not break the enemy ranks. The election was just fifty-two days from the day Cole was chosen president of the new municipal reform movement. That night, after the returns were all in, he gave an interview to the newspapers, claiming a possible honest majority. Among other things, he said, "I retire from active politics this evening." And he went back to George E. Cole & Company's office as printer and stationer, at 86 Dearborn Street.

Before the end of the week he changed his mind. He said later: "I saw what a slight conception I had of the magnitude and permanency of the struggle. I claimed the election of twenty-seven good aldermen out of thirty-six candidates. I was sure of six of the holdovers, and then drew on my optimism for the balance to make up an honest majority. All of which shows how green I was in undervaluing the resources of 'boodle.' I saw the weakness of reform in expecting to beat permanent and organized graft by an occasional spurt. It was like the 'minute man' against the 'regular.'"

In less than a week Cole was back in the fight harder than



ever and working tooth and toenail to hold a compact minority of one-third in an agreement to sustain the mayor's veto. There had been formed a company to operate a street-car line in the southwest portion of the city. This company had put through one of the Council's notorious free gift franchises (for a consideration on the side), which included Jackson Street (now Jackson Boulevard) — the only street running east and west in the heart of the city and not already occupied by a street-car line. The people were up in arms against this ordinance and the mayor had vetoed it. The consideration of this veto was to come up at the first meeting of the new Council on Monday evening, April 13. On the afternoon of the Saturday before this meeting Cole was informed that the so-called "gang" had planned to pass this measure over the veto before the newly elected aldermen were sworn in and given their seats.

Cole went into action. "I immediately subsidized the local messenger service," Cole said, "got in touch with reliable aldermen (both holdovers and prospectives) and brought together twenty-nine at the Union League Club on Sunday afternoon. After I had explained the situation to them they agreed that the newly elected aldermen should present their credentials to the city clerk and be sworn in before the meeting and demand their seats in time to support Mayor Swift's veto. We adjourned to meet at the League headquarters next day at 2 p. m. About nine o'clock Monday morning alderman elect (later to become a Federal judge) Charles M. Walker came into my store. He told me that he had just applied to city clerk Van Cleave to be sworn in. Van



Cleave had put him off with the statement that he did not have proper forms to be filled out and would meet him at the Council rooms in the evening. We both concluded that this showed the 'African in the wood pile.' I asked Mr. Walker to draw up a proper form and I printed it immediately, and arranged to have some one with legal authority present to administer the oath at our afternoon meeting. However, the city clerk in some way found out what was up and consequently had been able to find the right forms and was ready to perform his duty. The new men were all sworn in that afternoon, came to the council meeting, took possession of their seats, supported the mayor's veto, and saved Jackson Boulevard in its present form."

Before June 26, when the Yerkes Union Loop ordinance was to be brought up for passage, the reliable aldermen had built up a strong organization with such leaders as William S. Jackson, William Mavor, John M. Harlan, A. W. Maltby, Charles M. Walker and others, fully prepared for the contest. The ordinance was fought over until past midnight and they were defeated, but at no time was the vote opposing the measure and supporting compensation amendments lower than the one-third necessary to support the mayor's veto.

Cole immediately sought out Mayor Swift. Cole gives an account of the interview: "He asked me what I thought we ought to have in the way of compensation, and when I suggested the amount he said, 'Why, Cole, you're crazy. It would be impossible to put it through on that line.' I said, 'Mr. Mayor, there are at least twenty-four men who will stand by your veto absolutely.'

The mayor said, 'I don't believe for a moment that you can hold that number.' I said, 'All right, Mr. Mayor, I will try and prove it to you.' "

This led to an immediate meeting of a half-dozen aldermen in Mr. Harlan's office. An agreement was drawn up to stand by the mayor's veto and signed, and the half-dozen and Mr. Cole and Mr. Harlan started out to get signatures. Harlan and Cole toured by carriage until after midnight, getting some aldermen out of bed. The next day the group laid before Mayor Swift a communication urging him to veto the Van Buren Loop ordinance for lack of any compensation to the city in exchange for an enormously valuable franchise, and insisting upon the compensation provided for in an amendment offered by Alderman Fitch. This was supported by two typewritten pages of argument and signed by twenty-two aldermen. They needed one more. There were two more who were out of the city but could be counted on. Mayor Swift, however, decided to make his own bargain with Yerkes' forces. Mr. Cole admits that the mayor probably did what he thought was best and used the backing of the reliable aldermen to force through a bargain under which the city is getting some compensation.

The fight showed that the backbone of the "gang" was broken. The name "gray wolves" was now coined for them by Walter L. Fisher, indicating a hungry pack on the outside trying to get in.

## CHAPTER XII

### A UNITED STATES SENATOR SUNK

PREPARATIONS for the April election were begun by adding to the League committee Professor Graham Taylor, Allen B. Pond, the architect, and Francis Lackner, lawyer. The League now consisted of three lawyers, two merchants, a real estate man, a labor leader, a professor and an architect.

The summer and part of the winter of 1896 had been devoted to covering the Council proceedings, page by page, on all motions and votes on "boodle" ordinances. Thirty-four aldermen, the other half of the Council, were to retire in April, 1897. Five of them had consistently good records: Noble B. Judah, lawyer; Anton Novak, cigarmaker; A. W. Maltby, coal merchant; William R. Manierre, warehouse owner; and William Kent, land owner and rancher. John O'Neill had thrown his influence with the decent aldermen and was approved. The records of some were clear. They were uniformly good or uniformly bad. Some were mixed. One of these was Madden's. His record was gone into in detail. He was absent sometimes when a questionable franchise was passed and was present and voted for it over a veto. He supported nearly all motions to amend or strike out in favor

of the franchise-seeking company, and seemed privileged then to vote against the ordinance he had whipped into shape. This kept him off the newspaper black list next day. The record showed him a leader for Yerkes and consistently against adequate compensation.

The records of these thirty-four retiring aldermen were printed in pamphlet form and Cole mailed 400,000 of them, one to each registered voter. Madden had given up. He was candidate for United States Senator. It was all fixed. The machine control in 1896 seemed invincible. The big leaders were Henry Hertz, William Lorimer, coal man; Martin B. Madden, president Western Stone Company; and James Pease, painter. There were Doc Jamieson, druggist; Joe Braden, head of a New York life insurance agency; lesser leaders; and numerous first and second lieutenants.

They were business men, with politics for a specialty. Ordinarily kaleidoscopic in its changes, this combine was held together by self-interest. But each watched the other; each was valued by the number of delegates he could bring into the county and state conventions. If the combine had a near-control it could count on swinging the balance of power its way — buying it with the promise of little or much in the way of offices. It controlled as a corporation controls — through those who hold almost a majority of the stock.

This combine was composed of men who had risen from small beginnings. William Lorimer, ex-street-car driver, later coal man, with large profits for supplying the county, had risen, by degrees,

to control of the primaries in a string of west side wards. Elected to Congress in 1894, he was a candidate for renomination in 1896. Henry Hertz, born in Denmark, rising from bank teller to various clerkships in the recorder's office, criminal court clerk's office, then to coroner, then chief clerk of the election commissioners, had taken such an active and continued interest in the politics of his adopted country that he held sway over a number of northwest side wards. He was the agreed candidate for state treasurer. James Pease, sheriff since 1894, and former assessor, was up for re-election. Madden owned the Fourth Ward and reached over into the territory on the south for some support from Joe Braden, Drainage Trustee, and Thomas N. (Doc) Jamieson, Clerk of the Appellate Court and national committeeman. To the north, Madden could sometimes get the help of Perry Hull. Madden's ambition required state-wide support. The legislature named the senator. It was to meet in December. So John R. Tanner was taken in, as the combine's choice for governor.

All went well. Madden delivered to the county convention and, with Lorimer's help, Pease was named for sheriff. The congressional convention, in the Second District, had dutifully named Lorimer for Congress. The state convention met. The combine delivered to Tanner and Hertz. The election followed in November, 1896, and the McKinley vote against free silver elected a republican legislature and carried the four into office — all but Madden. In December the legislature met. Following the theory of representative government, advocated by the constitution makers, this deliberative body, chosen with care (theoretically), was to

pick one of Illinois' distinguished sons to send to Washington. The legislature was hand-picked, all set to follow orders. It was slow to act. In February a monkey-wrench was thrown into the machinery. Cole circulated his record of retiring aldermen. Madden's was included. His defeat for senator followed. The members from Cook County had knowledge of the potency of public records in blasting political ambitions of aldermen. Some of the Cook County members, and some from down-state, regardless of Tanner, could not be whipped into line. They were not anxious to send to the Senate a man the people would not re-elect alderman, and they did not.

Some think that Madden saw the light. In 1905 he was elected to Congress, became chairman of the appropriations committee and was a hard-working and efficient Congressman. He died at his post and in his country's service. He outlived the taint of Charles T. Yerkes.



## CHAPTER XIII

### YERKES INSTITUTES LIBEL SUIT

BUT all was not primroses in Cole's path. Mr. Yerkes was resourceful. He now owned the *Inter-Ocean*, purchased from William Penn Nixon, and had George Wheeler Hinman for managing editor. Cole and his committee could imagine Mr. Yerkes and his astute criminal lawyer meeting at the railway offices of the magnate to scan the aldermanic report carefully. It bore Cole's signature. It called a spade a spade. And these two heads came upon the statement, "This type of alderman (referring to James L. Campbell) is a greater menace to the community, and more dangerous to free institutions, than is the notorious and self-confessed boodler."

"Ah!" probably the learned counsel says. "We have him. This is criminal libel."

They consider that point. The probability of success in this line does not look good to them.

"Well, a suit for \$75,000 damages will be an effective method of putting this little stationer out of business," finally concludes Mr. Yerkes.

So Mr. Campbell is consulted, is ordered, probably, to con-



sent to the filing of a suit, and Cole receives a summons to answer to damages to the tune of \$75,000.

Of course, this was disturbing, and the League officials met. Did they mean, as the innuendo in the complaint stated, "that the said Campbell was a boodler"? It was not exactly so stated. But Cole knew that he did mean it, and said, "We meet the charge. The League's life depends on it." They did meet it. Edwin Burritt Smith filed the general issue, which meant that if Campbell proved that Cole said what he said, and that it was printed and circulated by him, with his signature, he was guilty. But there is a rule of law that if a person utters a truth, with good motives, and without malice, he is not liable for damages. This was covered by a plea of justification.

So we leave this case hanging over Cole for the next two years, trial being postponed apparently indefinitely.

Meantime, the second campaign progressed. New headquarters had been secured in the old Real Estate Board rooms at Randolph and Dearborn. A rail separated the lobby from the working force. The gate was simply a piece of scantling on a hinge. Cole's greeting in the morning was to lift this scantling and slam it down as he passed through. The effect was like the crack of a rifle. It said as plainly as words, "Man the guns. We're in action now." He called this "stirring up the animals," and woe betide the man with a duty assigned and not performed.

Cole claims he made a bad blunder in this campaign, in yielding to a request that the League stand for four independent candidates for assessor. "We tried to clean up another cesspool be-

fore we had purged the first," he said. "It tended to divide our forces, and to increase the number of our enemies." Never again did the movement step aside from the one issue of fitness of aldermen.

What brought about the mistake was this: Chicago is ruled under a charter, passed in 1873, when it was not nearly so large. The constitution prohibits special legislation. So Chicago is tied to a government in some respects absurdly inadequate. There is a dual government, city and county. At this time there were also seven township governments, lying wholly or partly within the city. Each had an assessor, collector, supervisor and clerk, all receiving excessive salaries, and spending money in gross disregard of the law. Gentlemen in high standing in the Real Estate Board proposed that the League back independent candidates of good reputation, for assessors in four townships, because there was a possibility of beating the regular candidates and getting an honest assessment. The independents were put up and backed by the League. The republican leaders complained to Cole that the movement would elect democratic candidates of bad reputation. Cole called the bluff. "Gentlemen," he said, "I grant you there is something in what you say, but the difference between the particular democratic candidates to whom you refer and their republican opponents is just the difference between a meat ax and a Damascus blade. The former will be open and brutal, but no more vicious and effective. The important point is that it will be you and your friends that will be stuck, if the democrats are elected. You and your party have control of the legislature, and in this way you

may be forced to grant relief by a change in our system of assessments, which has so frequently been asked for."

The independents were overwhelmingly beaten, and several of the meat axes were elected, and their looting was so coarse, open and brutal that within three years townships in Chicago were abolished by legislative act — this after twenty-five years of battling for their abolition.

Mayor Swift was to retire immediately after the election in April. The campaign to select his successor had developed into an intensely bitter four-cornered fight between Judge Nathaniel C. Sears, republican; Carter H. Harrison Junior, democrat (his first venture); John Maynard Harlan, independent republican; and Washington Hesing, independent democrat. Harlan made Yerkes and compensation for the streets his issue. While the League managed to avoid taking sides, the intensity of the fight and important issues absorbed public attention, and the aldermanic contests were lost sight of. As the returns came in it looked like the reform movement had lost ground. Cole was disappointed. He came to headquarters next morning with a glint in his eye. His first words were, "My boy, we can lose a battle, and not a war. We have a fight on our hands."

## CHAPTER XIV

### ELECTION CROOKS GO TO JOLIET

**A** FRAUD against the independent candidate, in the Seventeenth Ward, had been committed. An "invincible" bipartisan machine controlled the election of aldermen in the ward. Stephen P. Revere, republican, saloonkeeper and Yerkes alderman off and on in the Council since 1885, was a candidate for reelection. Maurice M. O'Connor, democrat, gas inspector and former alderman, was backing Maggio as democratic candidate. Revere and O'Connor played into each other's hands against outsiders, and James Walsh, independent, backed by Cole, was an outsider.

Graham Taylor, professor of Social Economics in the Chicago Theological Seminary, had come to Chicago in 1892. In 1894 he founded and became resident warden of the Chicago Commons, located in the Seventeenth Ward. He had classrooms for study, for sewing and dressmaking, and for cooking, and rooms for play and entertainment. The Commons was a club for the lowly workers and the foreign-born, mostly Italians. Professor Taylor, aided by Joseph A. O'Donnell, secured James Walsh, at one time a wholesale liquor dealer, as a candidate worthy of League

support against Revere and Maggio. Walsh was in good standing and fairly popular. He was nominated by petition as an independent. Cole backed him with a small appropriation for printing and postage. Election day rolled around. Taylor's man was elected in this ward of lowly workers and foreign-born, according to the returns that came in up to four o'clock in the morning.

It seemed that the invincible machine was not invincible. The bosses who had dominated the ward seemed not to be bosses at all. Then the hitch came. The returns from the Fifteenth Precinct were delivered to the election commissioner's office with the ballot box at four o'clock in the morning. They gave Revere the necessary votes to overcome Walsh. This precinct was under suspicion. Walsh watchers had been refused admittance. The delay in the returns seemed unnecessary. There was nothing to do but await the canvass of all the returns by the canvassing board, consisting of the election commissioners, county judge and city attorney. Here the sealed envelopes from all the precincts were opened. The tally sheets in each precinct — showing the number of tallies for each candidate and the signed return of the judges — were inspected, and the vote announced, and all precincts added together to give the official figure. This showed Revere elected. But, in the Fifteenth Precinct, the tally sheets showed that eighty tallies for Maggio (democrat) were roughly scratched off. Maggio was out of the running anyway, and some of the democratic votes might be useful to Revere.

Cole began proceedings in the Council to contest the election of Revere on the ground of fraud. The only way to get a right



to open the ballot boxes to find what became of those eighty votes was by a contest. The contest was referred to a committee. The committee failed to act, and Cole, through Walsh's attorneys, Joseph A. O'Donnell and Clayton E. Crafts, applied to the Supreme Court and secured a writ of mandamus, directed to His Honor, Mayor Harrison, and the City Council members, to open and count the ballots. The recount seated Walsh, October 25, six months after the election.

The recount had showed the returns to have been falsified. Cole laid the facts before State's Attorney Charles S. Deneen. Indictments were secured and capiases given to Sheriff Pease to make arrests of the three judges in the Fifteenth Precinct. No arrests were made by the sheriff. Albert C. Barnes, then Deneen's assistant, called on the sheriff's office. The deputy in charge of the writs said that he had called on Maurice M. O'Connor and had been told not to serve them. Next day Cole called upon Charles M. Faye, managing editor of the *Daily News*, and laid all the facts of the whole fight before him. Mr. Faye said, "Mr. Cole, I will publish whatever you write, over your signature." So Cole told his story to the people. In less than twenty-four hours the deputy called on Cole. The deputy palavered. Cole said, "If you don't have these men in court in time for trial, I will publish you and your office from the housetops, and appeal to the people so loudly and persistently that either I will be kicked out of the community as a nuisance or they will compel you to obey the law." O'Connor brought in two of the judges (one had skipped), and Assistant State's Attorney Barnes tried the case



immediately and vigorously before Judge Waterman. Cole's investigators reported a rumor that the jury had been tampered with. The jury disagreed. State's Attorney Deneen immediately ordered the case on trial again, and again Barnes prosecuted, and Patrick Ferris and John J. Hanrahan were found guilty and sentenced by Judge Chetlain to an indefinite term in Joliet prison.

Neither Boss Revere (republican) nor Boss O'Connor (democrat) counted very much in the Seventeenth Ward after Graham Taylor took an interest in affairs, supported by lowly workers and foreign-born. In 1901, Taylor and his Community Club elected a republican, a young Polish lawyer named John M. Smulski. He had first served in the Sixteenth Ward and then was moved to the Seventeenth, by change of ward lines. He became city attorney, treasurer of the state and president of the West Park board of commissioners, and later retired to conduct a banking business in the ward. In 1902, the Community Club, meeting at Chicago Commons, picked another lawyer, a democrat this time. He was William E. Dever. When approached, he at first refused to run because he could not afford it, but Raymond Robins, who had joined the Commons staff as resident worker in 1900, lately returned from the Klondike, was comfortably well off and backed Dever financially. The campaign was bitterly fought. Robins and Carl V. Wisner, young lawyer, also resident worker, manned the two most lawless precincts. They insisted on a square deal, and they got it. Dever was elected. Both Smulski and Dever served together for a year. After nine years in the Council, Dever was elected judge of the Superior

Court and resigned that office to become a candidate for mayor. He was elected and served one term.

It didn't make any difference whether a man backed by Taylor and Robins ran as a democrat, an independent or a republican. The question was, "Is he honest?"

## CHAPTER XV

### YERKES GETS ALLEN BILL THROUGH LEGISLATURE

IN THE campaign of 1896 Yerkes' control of the Council was broken. This was shown by his failure to put through the Union Loop ordinance in the customary form over a veto without adequate compensation. He now turned to the legislature. It was the same body that had been picked by Lorimer, Hertz, Pease, Madden and Tanner. In the winter of 1897 Yerkes caused a bill to be introduced in the Senate containing a clause to take away from the Council the franchise-giving power and give it to the legislature. Professor Graham Taylor, in his book, "Pioneering on Social Frontiers," credits George C. Sikes, student of street railway affairs and scholarly writer for the *Daily News*, with discovery of the "joker" in this bill. This bill was defeated. But in the house another measure, the notorious Allen law under which the City Council could grant fifty-year franchises, was passed. The bills were both denounced by the press and the public as "conceived in sin and born in corruption."

The future of the members who supported the bills was left to the voters. No criminal proceedings followed. Perhaps the situation was correctly stated by Ex-Governor John Peter Altgeld,

who had vetoed a somewhat similar bill. He said, "While there are probably not many outsiders who can go before a grand jury and swear to definite acts, yet there are such a multitude of facts, there are so many and such conclusive circumstances, there are so many things all pointing in the same way, that today there is hardly an intelligent man in the State of Illinois but who feels just as certain that the passage of these acts (including the Gas Consolidation bill) was secured by wholesale bribery, and is a stain upon our government and a stab at the life of the republican institutions, as he is that George Washington lived."

Yerkes was not through, and Cole must fight on. The Council could still grant franchises, and Mr. Yerkes and Mr. Cole lined up again for the aldermanic fight of 1898. The election would settle the question whether the Council was to represent private or public interest. Cole so directed his end of the fight that every ward was hotly contested. The reform ticket was made up of republicans, democrats and independents. The "gray wolves" were shown to have money galore, and it was used freely. On the other hand, Cole played all the politics he knew, and played it to a finish. The people, still aroused over the brazen acts of Yerkes in corrupting the legislature, accepted the recommendations of the League. The result on election day was a most complete victory for honest government.

That night one of Chicago's papers said this: "Charles T. Yerkes ceases to be a factor in Chicago politics; he is beaten, banished, driven from the city hall, with his chief bandits who had laid plans to loot the city of its rights for fifty years."

Cole went home the night of the election, April 4. He sat down and thought over the situation. The street car status under the Allen law was decided. Yerkes was no longer a factor. "I had given the work nearly all my time for over two years, and felt that I had accomplished all that I could. I concluded it was time to turn over the work to some one else." The next morning he presented his resignation as president of the Municipal Voters' League.

But this was not the first nor by any means the last time that he thought he was through. The day after the election Alderman Charles M. Walker called on him. Walker said he thought they were strong enough to name the committees, assume the initiative and begin some constructive, affirmative work. Cole said, "All right, work out your plan, and I will do what I can to help you." Walker, a democrat, got together ten other democrats who were willing to have Mayor Harrison name good, non-partisan committees. Cole went to work on the republican aldermen. There was much delay. Finally, as Alderman Coughlin put it, "We hooked and gaffed a few more reformers," and committees were named by the usual party caucus. It was another of those initial failures that led up to final success. A year from then the Council began and continued to name its committees through a non-partisan committee of the better aldermen.

## CHAPTER XVI

### ROPES FOR ALDERMEN — EXIT YERKES

**T**HIS slight victory of Yerkes' friends encouraged him to believe that he could yet win out. Either that or his desperation decided him to move in the fall to put through a fifty-year franchise under the terms of the Allen law. This brought the whole conflict to a focus, and it was hot indeed. There were rumors of boodle, threats of lynching, meetings of citizens in the central part of the city and throughout the wards, and resolutions passed.

One of these resolutions showed the temper of the public. It was adopted by the South Water Street merchants. It is worth quoting in full:

"WHEREAS, A condition exists in the city of Chicago that is contrary to the expressed wishes and detrimental to the interests of the citizens of the city, contrary to the principles of honor, honesty and good citizenship in the unmistakable intent of certain aldermen, known as the 'gang,' to betray, deceive and feloniously barter away the privileges of the streets of Chicago in exchange for boodle that represents the stealings of years from the traveling public of Chicago; and

"WHEREAS, The individual suspected of corrupting the alder-



men, known as the 'gang,' is known to be a dangerous ex-convict; and

"WHEREAS, The laws of the State of Illinois are found to be impotent in dealing with financial anarchists now threatening the interests of the three next generations of Chicago citizens; and

"WHEREAS, The patriotic impulse of American citizenship is now moved to commit necessary violence, bloodshed and murder in defense of its inherited rights; be it therefore

"RESOLVED, That the Mayor of the City of Chicago be requested to cause the instant arrest of said ex-convict under the statutes governing dangerous, disreputable and suspicious characters. And if the Mayor should find no laws existing whereby the personal liberties, rights and property of citizens of the City of Chicago can be protected, that he be called upon to issue a proclamation to the said citizens of Chicago, calling upon them to protect and defend their liberties, rights and property in such manner and through such effective measures as may be deemed necessary to accomplish that end."

The Council met. It is said some citizens came with ropes that they trailed over the balcony rail. There is at least some ground for the story. Ropes were talked of freely. Mayor Harrison had announced that under no circumstances would he allow the franchise to go through while the Allen law was on the statutes. It was an absolute certainty that there were more than enough votes to sustain his veto.

Yerkes gave up the fight, and a few weeks later the legislature obliterated the Allen law. By 1900 Yerkes had disposed of his

interests in Chicago. Later he turned up in London, but his history there is not a Chicago story.

Mr. Cole again quit. His resignation was accepted, and William Kent, professing his inability to perform the work, but anxious to see it go on, became president of the League and Allen B. Pond, the architect, became secretary, to be succeeded by Walter L. Fisher as secretary, who later became president. Under these men, with better organization and resources, greater results were accomplished than in preceding years.

## CHAPTER XVII

### LIBEL SUIT ABANDONED

AFTER his "retirement" Cole anticipated a breathing space. But the Campbell vs. Cole \$75,000 libel suit was pending. Preparation was necessary and had been made, and Cole wanted to get rid of the suit by trying it. He had admitted calling Campbell a boodler. Was Campbell's record sufficient to justify that statement? It would be much better to prove he took money for a vote. The citizens who pay aldermen for their votes do not talk: they themselves are guilty of bribing. Persons who know of such acts do not care to get mixed up in the matter.

But there are ways to get facts, if they exist. And the League had large experience in getting facts. It had many friends among the newspaper people; and newspaper people, if they have not the facts, at least know where to get them.

After much preliminary investigation, the way led to Charles M. Faye, managing editor of the *Daily News*. Mr. Faye knew a man, who told him he knew a man, who said he knew from another man that Campbell received \$500 for securing the last-named man a contract for disposal of the garbage in his ward. The last man was a teaming contractor. The second man was a

stockholder in the teaming company, who was sore because he found his company had paid out the \$500 and he had not received any of the profits.

The first man was a grocer and a friend of the stockholder, and to him the stockholder had confided. The grocer would not tell Cole's lawyer what he had told Mr. Faye until after he conferred with Mr. Faye. Then he told the story to Cole's lawyer.

Notice to Campbell's lawyer that Cole would take the deposition, that is, the sworn statement, of this stockholder who lived out of town, and notice to the garbage man that he would be called as witness to the facts within his knowledge. So the garbage man knew what Cole purposed to do — and he was a friend of Campbell. It was fair to presume that he got word to Campbell promptly.

The case came up. Cole insisted on setting the case for trial. A day's delay was asked by Campbell's attorney and granted. Campbell left town. There was no trial the next day. The case was ignominiously dropped. Cole had a burden lifted from his shoulders that had not weighed so heavily on him as it had on Mrs. Cole. That is why he wanted action. The outcome was his final victory against his arch enemy, Charles T. Yerkes.

Cole was a private citizen, again printer and stationer, at 86 Dearborn Street. This privacy lasted until the fall.

The three campaigns to purge the Council had brought many new men into public life. Ambition to serve had been awakened.

The Council became from then on a valuable school in politics, in legislation and in public work. Aldermen with publicly approved records behind them have been useful public servants in

higher office. Henry F. Eidmann was elected to the Sanitary Board. Charles M. Thomson, elected to the Council as an independent, went to Congress and later to the bench, being appointed to the Appellate Court. Others have distinguished themselves as judges and in city and county departmental work, and still others have made excellent members of the Illinois legislature.

When Lincoln Steffens came to Chicago to find out what the League fight was all about, he wrote up Chicago as "Half Free and Fighting On." He was writing a series of articles for *McClure's Magazine*, upon instances of municipal corruption and municipal reform, later incorporated in a book, "The Shame of the Cities." He picked Chicago for an article on municipal reforms. He summed up his findings: "They have beaten boodling. That is about all they have done so far, but that is about all they have tried deliberately and systematically to do, and the way they have done that proves that they can do anything they set out to do."

He saw Cole. "George E. Cole described himself to me as a 'second-class business man.' Standing about five feet high, he knows he is no taller, but he knows that he is tall enough. Cole is a fighter." But Steffens did not know at that time that Cole had just begun to fight.

Sitting in a little old swivel chair, low enough for his short legs to reach the floor, before a flat-top desk that might have survived the fire of 1870, Cole continued to advise young men of ambition to go into the City Council. One day a young man called upon him and was invited to sit down. "Mr. Cole," he said,



"I have graduated from Yale University, am not busy, and can afford to do my bit politically. What can I do?" Knowing the young man's family connection, and confident of his fitness, Cole blurted out, "Run for alderman."

The young man did, was elected, and before his term was out, at the age of twenty-nine, was elected president of the Sanitary District of Chicago. He gave his whole time to mastering the great construction jobs in progress, including the completion of the power plant at Lockport, the distribution and sale of its power, the building of the Evanston channel to give an outlet for sewage of the North Shore towns, planning for the Calumet-Sag channel to connect with the main channel and give the towns south an outlet for sewage disposal. He increased the revenue of the district by promoting use of its lands and docks by manufacturing plants at an annual rental. This caller on Cole who was induced to begin as alderman was Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the grandson of Joseph Medill, founder of the *Tribune*.

But all young men who tendered their service were not so willing to step into a place assigned. "I remember an instance," Mr. Cole said, "of a young man who wanted to 'enter politics.' I asked what ward he lived in and advised him to join his ward club."

"But, Mr. Cole, you don't understand. I feel I should have a place as an official of the Club, not a mere member."

"What could you do with a fellow like that?"



## CHAPTER XVIII

### COOK COUNTY COMBINE

EASILY and naturally corrupt city politics hooked into state politics. The Allen and Humphrey bills sealed the fate of Tanner for governor, as well as that of many of the legislators who had voted for the bills. As the primaries for 1900 approached, four candidates for governor appeared in the field: Judge Elbridge Hanecy, then judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County; Judge Orrin N. Carter, judge of the County Court of Cook County and head of the election machinery; Richard Yates, son of the war governor; and Walter Reeves, a former congressman. The latter two from down-state.

Judge Hanecy was an able lawyer and an industrious judge, but was looked upon as a politician; that is, he sat actively in party councils and had some political appointees credited to him. Judge Carter had been fearless in his administration of election affairs and had given the people a well-organized and efficient administration of the election machinery.

Madden, Lorimer, Hertz and Pease, aided by Doc Jamieson and John M. Smyth, threw themselves behind Judge Hanecy.

Cole, in his home ward, the Fourth, had caused to be organized

what was called the Fourth Ward Political Club, a body of independent citizens, ready to swing the balance of power for the interests of the ward. The members, naturally, sympathized with Judge Carter's campaign because of the high character of his public service. The combine anticipated trouble in the Fourth Ward because of the enmity between Cole and Madden. Cole, not Madden, picked the aldermanic candidates in the ward. Madden was succeeded by William S. Jackson, member of the Board of Trade, a man of the highest caliber. In 1899 Milton J. Foreman (General Foreman), then a young lawyer, became the colleague of Jackson. They served together until 1904, when Jackson was succeeded by another high-grade citizen, William J. Pringle, lawyer. Foreman and Pringle served together for the next succeeding seven years.

Efforts were made by the county central committee to secure Madden's withdrawal from the committee and replace him with John T. Richards. Madden stood pat for the time, but after the election in November following went so far as to offer his resignation at a packed meeting of the ward club and to have it unanimously turned down. Mr. Richards then resigned as president of the club. So the Fourth Ward Republican Club was still controlled by Madden. The primary election was to be conducted under the law providing that each ticket of delegates be printed on white print paper, 3½ by 6 inches, already mentioned as not being a secret ballot because of variance in the quality of the paper. Madden had friendly judges and clerks. They were selected by his ward club and recommended to the managing com-

mittee and in the absence of objection were approved by the county judge.

The ward club obediently endorsed Hanecy, and the lines were set to put in a solid delegation — two delegates from each primary district in the ward. But the Fourth Ward Political Club was not for Hanecy. One of its members, on the Sunday afternoon following Madden's endorsement, called a mass meeting in the office of a greenhouse on Michigan Avenue and organized for Judge Carter. This man was elected chairman and the florist vice-chairman of the Thirteenth Precinct Fourth Ward Orrin N. Carter Club — a long name for a small body. All who had been notified were there, but not enough to fill four offices; so the secretary and treasurer were combined in the third person present, a young lawyer.

Newspapers friendly to Carter carried announcements Monday morning of the new Carter organization. The suggestion was sufficient. Other precinct organizations for Carter quickly followed, and there was a fight against Hanecy in every primary district in the ward. At the primary election, of course, no close districts were carried. It was too easy to get three or four votes if needed by the Madden crowd. Their judges knew by the feel of the little paper ballots how many were needed, and with the usual light voting in a primary the vote would be close. But in two districts the Carter vote was heavy enough to carry, and Madden, for the first time, had a broken delegation. Four delegates from the Madden ward went to the State Convention at Peoria for Carter. This was a sore subject to Madden, and his

being twitted by Hertz and Pease for loss of a solid delegation did not please him.

Hanecy was not nominated. Neither was Carter. In the course of a long deadlock, one of the Carter delegations switched to Reeves. Immediately others attempted to and there was such confusion no count could be kept. The Hanecy delegates, led by Lorimer, who leaped upon the stage with a Yates banner, started a stampede for Yates that lasted thirty minutes. Lorimer perspired that warm day, as he lustily shouted and waved his pennant. Delegates formed in marching order and paraded through the hall, some chanting the name of Yates, others that of Reeves. During the pandemonium the Lorimer men got in their work, and order was not restored until they were assured that Yates would get the governorship plum on the next ballot.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION

THIS fight for Carter, Cole viewed and approved from the sidelines. He was still a private in the rear ranks, but suddenly and unexpectedly he was called upon to reorganize the Citizens' Association. The Citizens' Association of Chicago was organized in 1874, following a big fire in July, and primarily to organize for fire protection. But its field was larger, as shown by an extract from the address of its first president, Franklin MacVeagh, delivered in September, 1874, as follows:

"Let me first say, then, that a prime purpose of this Association is to conserve the good public impulses of this community. The city is always, but especially after an emergency like the fire of July or an exhibition of unusual official immorality, full of good public impulses and good thought. Hitherto these have been allowed to waste themselves like the harmless flashing of powder, because there was no organization that had the force to conserve and crystallize the best public sentiment of the people. Ours is such an organization. Not only will it conserve, it will promote these best public impulses and this larger thought. I will assure the citizen that if the public grievance he has is real, or if the



public thought he has is worthy, there is here an organized body that can and will exert a large force to realize the purpose for which he, single-handed, is too weak."

Joined with Mr. MacVeagh in what proved to be a stupendous and continuous program prolonged over a period of fifty-six years were Mark Skinner, C. M. Henderson, Marshall Field, Henry W. King, R. T. Crane, E. G. Mason, Murry Nelson, Jacob Rosenberg and George Armour. Some of these were in the service for a number of years.

Through the early efforts of the Association a fire limits ordinance was passed, the water supply thoroughly tested and the fire department improved under General Shaler. Ballot box stuffing was dealt a deadly blow. The county commissioners' ring and the south town ring were attacked. This attack in 1876 was a beginning of a fight on corrupt township organization that was successfully concluded in the year Mr. Cole took hold. Almost continually, efforts were made to secure the abolition of the townships by law, but were successfully opposed by those profiting by the large town funds and payrolls. A petition for abolition had been presented in 1874 and turned down by the county commissioners. Consolidation of the then three towns was proposed but obstacles prevented. Later a special law was secured, submitted to popular vote and carried, but afterwards declared unconstitutional. In 1881 an amendment to the constitution was asked of the legislature and defeated by the Cook County representatives. The fight was continued at the polls, before the county board and in the legislature, and by a proposed constitu-



tional convention, but political opposition blocked the abolition of townships.

Blazened on the Citizens' Association's banner of achievement are the adoption of the civil service law and the inception of the drainage canal, each a story in itself. The Association's reports on main drainage, water supply and waterways fill a volume. Track elevation, the jury commission and the Torrens law were among the Association's advocacies.

Succeeding Mr. MacVeagh as presidents up to the year 1900 were A. A. Sprague, Edson Keith, John L. Thompson, A. A. Carpenter, Edwin Lee Brown, Francis B. Peabody, J. J. Glessner, J. Harley Bradley, I. K. Boyeson, Melville E. Stone, R. J. Smith, E. Fletcher Ingals and John McLaren.

During all this time the Citizens' Association had for secretary James C. Ambler. In 1895, Mr. Ambler, after a long career of usefulness, became ill. During his illness the Association drifted. In 1900 he died. The membership had fallen from 1200 to 300. Along in October of this year a letter signed by Murry Nelson, Francis B. Peabody and John McLaren asked Cole, who had long been a member, to attend a conference at the offices of the Citizens' Association. Cole came. The advisability of merging with a new society organized along similar lines was discussed. Cole's opinion was asked. He said, "It seems to me that this Association has such a record of achievement and has gained the public confidence to such a degree that the directors have no right to surrender its individuality while there are yet important and necessary reforms to be accomplished."

"To what reforms do you refer?" Cole was asked.

Cole paused. There came into his mind his futile attempt to reform the townships by electing good assessors.

"We must get rid of these rotten township governments," he said.

"We have been trying that for years," some one said.

"Yes, but you probably have not gone to work the right way. The time has come to stop throwing grass and start throwing stones."

"How would you go about it?" he was asked.

"I would rap these thieves on the knuckles until they let go of the plunder."

In addition he suggested that the county civil service law was being crucified in such a way that it was worse than no law at all. Cole was thanked and he retired. A few days after, Eugene E. Prussing called and said the directors had adopted Cole's suggestions and had asked him to become president. He accepted, saying, "I never yet gave advice that I was not ready to accept for myself. If it is up to me, I will take the job, but you must guarantee me full swing." They did. The executive committee consisted at this time of E. Fletcher Ingals, Murry Nelson, Francis B. Peabody, Christoph Hotz, Charles H. Mulliken, John McLaren, Robert E. Jenkins, George Merryweather, J. Harley Bradley, Julius Stern, William Kent, Herman B. Butler and William F. Hall. "Unlike the start of the Municipal Voters' League," Mr. Cole said, "I came to the Citizens' Association fully equipped with an excellent executive committee. I needed a secretary; so I secured Hoyt King and was all set to go."

## CHAPTER XX

### ATTACKS TOWNSHIP AND COUNTY FRAUDS

**I**MMEDIATELY upon his election Cole substituted action for reports; indictments and convictions for petitions to the political powers. If he desired facts from a public record, he sent an emissary to get them, armed with a petition for a writ of mandamus, prepared for filing in case of refusal. Armed with this, its use was frequently unnecessary. The Grand Jury and the Criminal Court seemed to Cole the means to secure instant reform of a corruptly conducted office. When Cole began to shout from the housetops public officials began to sit up and take notice. He trained his guns on the corrupt township officials.

The town government, with no necessary functions since the creation of the County Board of Assessors, voted unlimited compensation to officers and for deputy collectors, whose only service was rendered to party machines. To obtain these funds, town officers, without conforming to legal requirements, would file with the county board, estimates based on illegal salaries and padded expense accounts, and ask for a levy of these sums.

Cole's first act was to appeal to the County Board to refuse these levies. He showed that the law allowed the towns two per

cent of taxes collected, to cover their expenses. This was more than enough. No extra levies were needed. The County Board passed the levies. President Irwin vetoed them. Al F. Gorman, supervisor of the town of Lake, for the combine of plundering townships, sought by court action to compel the county clerk to extend the tax anyway. Cole, with Julius Stern as special counsel, stepped in — having the consent of the county clerk and the county attorney. The case was heard before Judge Dunne, and Julius Stern presented the argument that dealt the township its first effective blow. Defining what were legal salaries and legal expenses, Judge Dunne stripped them of extra levies and limited even the amounts that could be spent out of the two per cent of taxes to be collected by the towns. The town officers made another attempt before the County Board, but the presence of a Citizens' Association committee prevented action.

On the heels of this success, Cole had the Association's attorney file an injunction against the town of Lake, whose board threatened unlawful expenditures. The writ was granted by Judge Dunne and his act affirmed by Judge Adams of the Appellate Court. Here were four knockouts. But the towns hadn't had enough yet. "With the boldness of outlaws, in the face of public denunciation," Cole's report says, "the town officers still threatened unlawful expenditures."

Cole announced his determination to prosecute criminal violations of the law. Two south town deputy collectors were indicted for extortion. Cole secured an injunction against members of the west town board who threatened illegal expenditures. At the final

meetings of the boards of auditors, information of their expenditures was secured. Expenses had been greatly reduced, except in the south town and in the north town. On the south town collector's payroll 585 political workers had been taken care of. One man drew \$20 per day, Sundays included. His duty was "watching things" night and day. Another served the legislature at Springfield and the township in Chicago at the same time. The saloons were filled with these collectors, whose presence in the town office would crowd it, and who had no service to perform. Illegal salaries were paid the officers without audit and charged to expense. In one instance, pocketbooks, stationery and bric-a-brac used for Christmas presents were included in a printing bill, but not so itemized. Suits against the supervisor's and collector's bondsmen were filed and the two officials were indicted for embezzlement and for withholding public funds. The north town clerk was enjoined from collecting a warrant for excess salary allowed him. The collector of Lake was brought in and fined for violating the injunction. He had paid salary to a man who had not served.

Several of these cases were prosecuted by State's Attorney Deneen. Several were yet untried, when one day Cole was approached by Fred M. Blount, republican politician and banking associate of John R. Walsh, democrat. "Mr. Cole," he said, "I think I know you well enough to know that your main object is not to send a lot of cheap skates to Joliet. Now, what are you after?"

"Frankly, now," said Cole, "my main object is to wipe out



township governments, and I propose to keep this fight up as long as I have any ammunition to fight with — or until you people at Springfield grant our petition and do away with township governments. You and I know that these governments are utterly useless and are strongholds of fraud and corruption.”

Well, Blount happened to have a friend who was on the bonds of some of the officials, and who would like to avoid the publicity of their trial. “I tell you what I will do,” Blount said. “If you will agree not to try these cases, I will promise to see that your bill is passed during this session of the legislature.” The Civic Federation had introduced a strong anti-township bill providing for their consolidation, and making certain county officials ex-officio township officials. This would wipe them out. The bill was being held up in committee.

Cole promised to do what he could to see that this man’s friends were not tried before the legislature adjourned. “I will say further that if the law is enacted wiping out township governments, I will be more than willing to use any influence I have toward postponing the trials indefinitely.” That is now thirty years ago, and the cases have not yet been tried.

Cole defends the miscarriage of justice in this case. “If I had refused this overture, it is probable that the law would not have been passed, although these men might have been convicted. As it was, the township governments were wiped out and Chicago was made permanently better by the act.”

Cole next turned his attention to the County Civil Service Commission, the conduct of whose members had been investigated



by him. These members, of no particular fitness for their positions, were James D. Morrison, Walter A. Lantz and George W. Lovejoy. Lovejoy acted as secretary. They were seldom in the office. The law required a competitive examination, advertised in advance. The system they used is described by Cole: "A political leader wanted a job for John, say, who was a handy worker in carrying primaries. He would ask a county commissioner to put him on the County Hospital payroll. The county commissioner sent John to the clerk of the Civil Service Commission. The clerk would ask John his name and address, how many days there were in the week, how many weeks in the month and how many months in the year. If John could not answer all three, but could answer two questions correctly, he would pass him and certify him for the appointment." This was Cole's way of describing the system that selected the six hundred employees in the charitable and penal institutions of the county.

The commissioners were amused at the investigation of their office and ignored demands that they comply with the law. Cole submitted evidence to State's Attorney Deneen. He issued a subpoena to the commissioners to produce their records. The commissioners refused. Deneen sent two assistants to the commissioners' office to secure the records. The commissioners themselves could not be found. Deneen's assistants broke open a desk, secured the records and took them before the Grand Jury.

In the meantime, one of the commissioners had called on Cole and appealed for mercy on the ground that his conviction would bring his wife down with nervous prostration. Cole remembered

that his own appeals for lawful examinations had merely amused this man, and was not moved.

Indictments were voted, vigorously prosecuted by Assistant State's Attorney Albert C. Barnes and the three commissioners convicted. This removed them from office and disqualified them from holding office for five years. The case was not final, however, in effect, until a Supreme Court decision confirmed this conviction.

New commissioners were appointed, who respected their oath of office and made the county civil service effective.

## CHAPTER XXI

### FINDS CONDITIONS IN LEGISLATURE BAD

**I**NTEREST in clean legislation now turned Chicago's eye on the state body. Again Mr. Cole's work was interrupted. In October, 1901, a notable dinner was given at Kinsley's restaurant. The work of the Citizens' Association was commended. Its work had met with public approval and its membership had doubled. This was its annual meeting and two hundred members were present. The dinner was notable in that it included among those present a man who was to become governor of the state, one to go to Congress, two to occupy places on the Republican National Committee, three to become members of a President's cabinet and one to become mayor of Chicago. There were present judges, aldermen and members of the city council. In addition there were men high in the business life of Chicago, and public-spirited citizens from all walks of life.

Rollin A. Keyes, partner of Franklin MacVeagh, was there. It was at his suggestion that conditions in the Illinois Legislature were made the subject of discussion. Judge John Barton Payne was introduced as chairman for the evening.

Lawrence Y. Sherman, ex-speaker of the house, later to be

Lieutenant Governor and still later United States Senator, addressed the meeting. Speaking of the causes of corrupt politics, he said: "Few men whose names serve to swell the payroll absent themselves from the primary. They can be successfully met only by a like body. Unfit men get upon party tickets because of the apathy of the non-office-holding voters. They justify what Governor Ford exclaimed in the bitterness of his heart, that 'One party is governed by the office holders and the other by the office seekers.' In the republican primaries held in Chicago in May, 1900, fewer than one-fourth of the votes given for McKinley at the following election were cast. More than three-fourths of the voters absented themselves from the primaries. An overwhelming majority of any political party wish a good government. A decisive majority of all people regardless of party ask for the best government possible. Eternal vigilance is its price. The source of all political power is in the people."

Judge Payne introduced Samuel Alschuler as "the man many of us would like to greet as governor." Mr. Alschuler, former house leader of the democrats, said in part: "If you want a good legislature, go there yourselves. Any of you would raise the legislative standard — anyway you think you would, else what are you here for? Scatter, then, to your homes in the various senatorial districts. In due time stand as candidates for nomination for legislative office. Bid outside bosses and big corporations 'Hands off' and organize and enforce your demands. Some of you will be sure to be elected."

In this gathering was Francis W. Parker, elected next year to

the state senate, vigorously to oppose the senate combine. Sherman himself went to Springfield and led the opposition to the lawless house organization. John P. McGoorty was present and later was elected Representative.

Walter L. Fisher stressed the importance of street railway legislation for Chicago in the coming session.

Many of the supporters of the Allen bill in 1897 had been relegated to other fields. Some, unable to retain their seats in the legislature, went to Congress; some back to their old counter jobs in the county or city building. But the taint of Yerkes remained, and the sandbagging industry in the legislature had waxed strong. A sandbagger, regulator or holdup bill poses as a bill to regulate, tax, license or prohibit some industry. These are directed against insurance, banking, transportation and other companies. The Board of Trade was attacked annually. This was Augustus W. Nohe's favorite victim. Nohe was dubbed "Fire escape Gus" because of a bill he pushed in a previous session favoring use of a special design of fire escape, made by a company in which he was interested. He was a protégé of William Lorimer. He had been in the bucket shop business.

Some members and some of the public were indifferent to this sandbagging practice. The fact was, these bills crowded the calendar and forced trading with crooks for votes. It was not unusual that ten per cent of the bills introduced in the house were such bills. They would come from about fifteen members, mostly from Cook County, and go to the committees on municipal corporations, corporations, railroads and license. The clique was given



control of these committees as a reward for support of the organization candidate for speaker in the republican caucus. In a fight between two factions of the party ten or fifteen votes were decisive.

It was clear that party lines had little to do with the work of the legislature. Yet partyism was used to divide honest men and the party caucuses were adhered to.

It was the sense of the meeting of the Citizens' Association that the legislature lay aside factionalism and partisanship and elect a speaker who would respect his oath of office and appoint committees promptly and on lines of honesty and fitness; that it abolish the vicious and heavily padded payroll used to buy votes for the speaker; that the legislature give its time to consideration of legitimate legislation, the sessions shortened and business methods pursued; that it become in fact what then it was only in theory, a truly deliberative body.

As Mr. Fisher had said, Chicago was particularly interested in street railway legislation. Its principal street railway grants were about to expire under the terms of the ordinance. The companies were claiming a longer term under an ancient act of the legislature. Chicago feared the legislature. The election of men on their merits, regardless of party, was the suggested remedy.

John H. Hamline offered a resolution: That the chairman appoint a committee of ten to take charge of the movement to secure fit representation from Cook County and invite the cooperation of all suitable local organizations and voters of all parties.

The ten selected were Rollin A. Keyes, Murry Nelson, Judge



Tuley, John H. Hamline, E. B. Butler, John V. Farwell Jr., R. M. Bissell, A. C. Bartlett, J. Harry Selz and George E. Cole. Later Judge Payne, Elmer Washburne and Joseph A. O'Donnell were added to the committee. Two representatives each were selected from the Iroquois, Union League, Standard, Columbus, Commercial, Bankers' and Merchants' Clubs and from the Citizens' Association and the Civic Federation.

It was quite natural that Mr. Keyes, as chairman of the subcommittee on organization, should call upon George E. Cole to accept the responsibility and labor of organizing and carrying through the campaign. But Cole was preparing to retire again. Six years of public work, at a loss of time, of business and of money, and the wear and tear on a man of fifty-six years, was beginning to tell. Keyes admitted the weight of Cole's argument, but he said he could find no one to assume this new obligation. After repeated efforts to find a leader, again Keyes appealed to Cole. Cole said he realized the necessity of the work — that municipal relief required an appeal to the legislature — and replied, "If you and the committee agree that it is me or nobody, I will put myself in your hands and take your orders."

## CHAPTER XXII

### COLE PICKED TO CLEAN UP LEGISLATURE

**A**GAIN Cole was elected to lead what looked like a forlorn hope. The name "Legislative Voters' League" was adopted and a platform approved. The platform was just a repetition of the oath of office — that the member of the legislature would support the Constitution of the United States and of the state and discharge his duties faithfully; that he had not made any promise in the nature of a bribe to influence any vote at the election; that he would not accept any money or anything of value for his vote or influence in matters of legislation. Just one step further: the platform demanded that a candidate have intelligence enough to understand the meaning of this oath and that his record should be such as to justify the belief that he would keep it.

Executive committee members were elected. They were William T. Baker, John H. Hamline, Joseph A. O'Donnell, Murry Nelson, John B. Farwell Jr., Rollin A. Keyes, Frank H. Jones, Richard M. Bissell, George E. Dawson, B. J. Rosenthal and Arthur M. Barnhart.

An advisory committee consisted of representatives of the Union League, Commercial, Merchants' and Iroquois Clubs and

of the Citizens' Association and the Civic Federation. Judge Tuley, getting along in years though he was, headed this committee.

Mr. Cole proceeded at once with Mr. King as secretary to prepare for the primary set for May, 1902. He organized his secretary and assistants into a working force. The records of retiring members were examined. Where a new candidate sprang up, his neighbors and business men in his locality were interviewed. Criticism was run down to be substantiated or found baseless.

The legislature was made up of three house members and one senator from each of fifty-one senatorial districts throughout the state. That made one hundred and fifty-three house members and fifty-one senators. Nineteen of these districts were in Cook County, giving Cook fifty-seven house members and nineteen senators. This apportionment still maintains, although the constitution provides that a reapportionment shall be made every ten years.

Only forty-six of the seventy-six from Chicago were found good or passable, and the facts were published. No libel suits resulted, although the *Daily News* almost had one. Cole's report showed that a candidate had been indicted for election frauds and *acquitted*. The *Daily News* proof read "indicted and *convicted*." When shown the error, Mr. Faye, managing editor, dashed for the composing-room. It is needless to say that the papers already printed went — well, they went wherever newspaper scrap goes. Newspapers do not court dead-open-and-shut libel suits.

Thirteen of the unfit thirty members were renominated. Unfortunately nomination to the house, in most instances, is as

good as election. By the so-called cumulative vote sponsored by Joseph Medill each voter has three votes for representative. There are three to elect, and the voter can give one vote to each, one and one-half to two or all three to one candidate. The idea of Medill was that the minority party could always be sure of one representative in a district by nominating one and casting all three votes for him. It became the practice for the majority party in a district to nominate two and the minority party one candidate, and that settled it unless an independent came in by petition. So the League placed ten independents in the field and three were elected.

The result of Cole's first campaign was to send some new and excellent blood to Springfield from Cook County for the session of 1903. John McManaman came down, an independent from Graham Taylor's territory. Clarence Darrow, lawyer of exceptional ability, was elected as an independent, and Oliver W. Stewart as a prohibitionist. Stewart, of course, was practically an independent. He soon captured the legislature by an eloquent and remarkably able address, nominating his party's candidate for United States Senator. Though an ex-minister and a prohibitionist, he was a wonderfully good political mixer and he made friends. Francis W. Parker, patent lawyer, wealthy and independent in action, kept the senate stirred up with his denunciation of bills containing "jokers" — bills of good-sounding titles but containing an apparently innocent little sentence that served some special interest.

There was also in this legislature Joseph Medill Patterson,

of the *Tribune* family, cousin of Medill and Robert R. McCormick. All three of the grandsons of Joseph Medill, one-time mayor of Chicago, were to serve in legislative bodies. Also a notable member was Abel Davis, now General Abel Davis of the Chicago Title & Trust Company. He distinguished himself by making Gus Nohe sit down in the house by a threat of personal violence. Nohe was objecting to Cole being on the floor. Edward J. Brundage, later Attorney General of Illinois, and Michael L. McKinley, who became a militant judge on the Cook County bench, were members. Richard Burke, also to ascend later to the bench; Henry W. Austin, Oak Park banker; Robert E. Pendarvis, lawyer; and M. B. McNulty, lumberman, were among those sent down in the first reform fight. These and other good men went to Springfield in 1903 and made the Leland Hotel a more fit place to live out a session than it had been in many years.

Then commenced the long wait for the house to organize. Two days a week for six weeks were needed to set up the pins for organization of the house and to arrange distribution of the appropriation for payroll. During this lazy period news must be picked out of thin air, but a good time was coming. The magicians sent to glean facts were the best men on the political staffs. Leroy Vernon was there for the *News*, "Hi" Fargo for the *Post*, John Corwin for the *Tribune*, John Lane for the *Inter-Ocean*, Malcolm McDowell for the *Record*, and "Barney" Mullaney for the *Times-Herald*.

Privileges of the press gallery were given the League representative through the courtesy of Victor F. Lawson, proprietor



of the *Daily News*. For doing this he was vigorously attacked by the *Inter-Ocean*. The adoption of the League representative by Lawson gave facilities for news gathering and record making by the League that were not pleasing to the Gus Nohe element controlled by Lorimer.

Lorimer had been disappointed in the campaign. The *Daily News* had cartooned him leaning dejectedly against a tree within a pasture surrounded by a barbed-wire fence. He had a large plate with a very small piece of pie on it. The piece of pie was labeled "majority." Beyond the barbed-wire fence was a bulldog, "the independent vote," with the seat of Lorimer's pants in his jaws.

The *Daily News* for November 5 thus summed up the result: "The good work of cleaning up the legislature has begun, and it will not be abandoned until Chicago has secured such representatives at Springfield as it needs."

The so-called machine, at that time, however, powerful in the state, organized the legislature defeating L. Y. Sherman in the republican caucus and electing John H. Miller of McLeansboro speaker. Miller gave Lorimer followers the "good committees" as a reward for their support.

The treatment accorded citizens coming before these committees merely in the interests of the public was shameful. H. N. Higinbotham appeared before a Gus Nohe committee in behalf of Marshall Field to offer to build the Field Museum on the lake front. State consent was necessary. Mr. Higinbotham not only did not get respectful consideration but the matter in that year did not get beyond the committee.



But the end of this régime was sudden, startling and magnificent in its results. Reform did not await another election. The republican house organization, a majority of the caucus but a minority of the total house members, carried things too far and with too high a hand. The happy issue was forced by the fight to pass the traction bill, a bill to enable cities to own and operate their street railways. The railway grants in Chicago were about to expire, under the ordinances. As stated, the railways were claiming a longer term under an old act of the legislature. The people of Chicago were determined to get rid of these claims before granting new franchises. In the new franchises they proposed to reserve the right to purchase at or before the expiration of the extended terms. The city was without legal authority to exercise this right. With such authority it was obvious that in the approaching negotiations with the companies the city would be in far better position to protect its rights and make valuable reservations for the future. Lorimer and the editor of the *Inter-Ocean* had asserted that there would be no traction legislation at this session. It was believed that the street railway companies, especially those formerly controlled by Charles T. Yerkes, desired the defeat of any bill that would really give the city the power it desired and needed. A carefully prepared and conservative bill for municipal ownership had been drawn by Walter L. Fisher, then secretary of the Municipal Voters' League. It was introduced by Senator Carl Mueller and became known as the Mueller bill.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### COLE INCITES REVOLUTION IN HOUSE

THE dominant faction of the republican party was in control. Opposed was the better element of the republican and the democratic parties. The plan of the machine in the house was to kill the Mueller bill which had come over from the senate and then to substitute for it a sham bill conferring no effective power on the city.

Mr. Cole was on the ground. He held a meeting in a little back room in the Leland Hotel. There were three republicans, three democrats, a prohibitionist and a pitcher of ice water. There were also three chairs, one bureau, one bed and a box of cigars. It was a packed meeting. Mr. Cole stated his belief that the holdup organization of the house should be overthrown. "It will be necessary," he said, "to start a movement that will bring the good men of the republican and democratic parties to work together." They agreed with him. A steering committee was formed at once, with the prohibitionist for chairman. He was Oliver W. Stewart, by this time respected by both the democrats and the republicans. He handled the organizing work so well that before the impending battle came, the committee consisted of

nine democrats, nine republicans, one prohibitionist and one independent. They debated nightly over the methods to be pursued to secure fair play in considering the bills. Representatives of this committee had waited upon the speaker to ask if he would allow members their constitutional right to roll-call and to recognition on the floor. The speaker's answers had been non-committal and evasive. Unfair exercise of the speaker's power was anticipated.

To explain the importance of having the speaker friendly it is necessary to discuss the parliamentary rules and tactics used in steering a bill through the house. A bill must go to committee, be printed, be reported out to pass, and be read on three different days. It may be amended after second reading; it must be engrossed before third reading. Then it is in the order of passage and requires in the house seventy-seven votes to pass. With a friendly house and speaker, it may be introduced by unanimous consent (wholly dependent on the speaker's hearing objections if made), be read a first time without reference to a committee, read a second time on the following day and the third day passed. This is the short route. The bill to provide for incidental expenses, including the padded payroll, invariably follows this route.

When reported to the house a bill goes on the calendar to be read a first time in its order. Then begins advancing of bills by unanimous consent without waiting to reach them in order. Here is where the organization has absolute control. Unanimous consent is subject to the speaker's acuteness of hearing. His hearing is sharpened or dulled according to the good standing of the objector or of the member pushing the bill. If one not friendly to

the house organization wants to have his bill considered over an objection, he must move to suspend the rules. The speaker may refuse to recognize him, or may put his motion and declare it carried or not, as suits his and the organization's desire. So the pet bills are jumped over others ahead of them on the calendar, while the ones not having the backing of the house organization are retired farther and farther down until their ultimate passage becomes hopeless. If the bill of the independent member reaches second reading it may be killed by striking out the enacting clause or by tacking on some obnoxious amendment that makes it repulsive to its former friends. To carry out the will of the organization the speaker declares amendments carried or the contrary on viva-voce vote. Demands for roll-calls are ignored by him in violation of the members' constitutional rights. This is called gaveling a bill through. Formerly the gavel was used to carry through political measures of the majority party and to prevent obstructive and dilatory tactics of the minority party. By gradual growth it has come to be used to help or to defeat legislation in which the organization has an interest, although the majority may have a contrary view.

The foregoing will explain the importance of capturing the house organization and why speaker John Miller was beseeched to allow members their constitutional rights in considering the Mueller bill.

Day by day the little committee headed by Oliver W. Stewart grew, until just before the battle it included half the membership of the house. Practically all the Cook County democrats and all

the Cook County republicans (except the strictly organization men), together with the three independents and some members from down-state, joined in the determination to secure their constitutional rights. Force was openly advocated in the meetings of this voluntary steering committee. No peaceful method of securing those rights could be advanced by the shrewdest lawyers or the most experienced politicians. Mandamus could not correct the journal. Criminal prosecution was deemed inexpedient and of doubtful success.

On this memorable day in April, true to prediction, came the crisis. The antis were roused to white heat at the methods threatened by the organization to suppress fair consideration of the street railway bill. On the floor were Mayor Carter H. Harrison Junior and many of Chicago's best aldermen. Graeme Stewart, Harrison's opponent for mayor, and John M. Harlan, Stewart's rival for republican nomination, were there. Judges, representatives of the Municipal and Legislative Voters' Leagues and many citizens of Chicago were occupying seats about the lobbies awaiting developments. The excitement was intense.

In dead silence, at noon, when the business of the morning had been disposed of, the reputed author of the organization's measure rose. He offered his bill as a substitute for the Mueller bill desired by the Chicago City Council. Pandemonium broke loose. Fifty members were on their feet demanding a roll-call. Under the constitution five would be entitled to it on demand. In the face of this demand, the speaker's lips were seen to move, the gavel would go up and come down, and it was known that the



substitution had been made and the organization had done its work. Holding the floor, the organization leader moved in rapid succession six amendments to his bill so substituted, and six times the gavel fell, in the face of ever-increasing cries of "Roll-call! Roll-call!" Women filled the seats back of the speaker, too frightened to move, in the face of the mob demanding their retirement. The most dignified members were in a frenzy and were held in check only by the presence of the ladies behind the speaker — placed there, it was suspected, for this purpose. But when the last act of arbitrary power had been exercised, with one accord the majority, already on their feet, made a spontaneous move toward the speaker's chair. The move was precipitated by a hurtling volume of the legislative proceedings propelled through the air toward the speaker from the hand of Representative Richard Burke, democrat of Cook County. In an instant, a struggling, maddened crowd of members was battling at the right of the speaker in an attempt to seize him, and it was prevented only by the political henchmen of the organization, paid to wear titles as janitors and policemen. All this time the Western Union wires were hot with dispatches to the Chicago newspapers, and pencils and typewriters were doing double duty that day to pave the way for the startling headlines that must appear in extra afternoon papers on the streets of Chicago.

Headlines in letters an inch and a quarter high across the whole front page were not then the fashion. The *Daily News* headlined the story in double column as follows:



# **WILD RIOT IN THE HOUSE**

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**Miller, Surrounded by His Friends as Bodyguard,**

**Gavels Through the Lindley Bill Amid Bedlam on the Floor**

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**The Fleeing Officer Takes Refuge in His Room,**

**And the Legislature Is Reorganized, with Chas. Allen as Temporary Speaker**

---

**Obnoxious Measure Is Considered with Ninety-Seven**

**Members Present— It Is Thrown Out and Mueller Bill, with One Amendment, Is Substituted**

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**Rump Organization Orders 100 Dinners and Police**

**Guard Asked — Trouble Is Expected This Afternoon and State Militia May Be Called Out**

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**Talk of Calling an Extra Session Should Proceedings**

**of the Rump House Be Declared Illegal — Several Members Hurt in Riot That**

**Resulted from Autocratic Rulings of Miller**

Richard Burke was on the casualty list. He sprained his wrist hurling "Proceedings of the General Assembly" at the speaker. Al Glade, Lorimer henchman, clashed with John Werdell, fighting democrat, and both were listed as casualties.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### REVOLUTIONISTS CONTROL

THE speaker escaped. He did not run, perhaps, but his movement was not deliberate. He retired with as much dignity as great haste permitted him to assume, and left on that side where the disorder was least and between a double row of house policemen. It was some hours before he was again seen. The house members remaining in session (ninety-six of the one hundred and fifty-three) did not at first intend that he should return without the state militia as an escort. They prepared to and did organize the house. Homer Tice engineered the parliamentary proceedings. As soon as the turmoil had ceased, after many efforts he made himself heard. He was not heard until it was known that his object was friendly, and then to make a motion to elect a temporary speaker in the absence of the regularly elected speaker. L. Y. Sherman expounded on the house's parliamentary status. He held the proceedings regular in that a quorum was present and the regularly elected speaker absent. A clerk, a doorkeeper and a sergeant-at-arms were duly elected, and by this time, order being restored, the house proceeded with business. The matter of impeachment of the speaker was referred to a committee of lawyers

— Sherman, Darrow, Rinaker and Bowles. While nothing came of this, it was a worth-while gesture. In an orderly and parliamentary way, the work of the organization was undone and the Mueller bill again placed in its regular order on the calendar. The proceedings were of questionable legality but were effective. And what was transacted at this rump meeting was afterwards in substance duly repeated in regular session and became embodied in the laws of the state. Although the ninety-six allowed the regular organization to resume peacefully, the decent members ran things after that.

When Miller appeared again in the speaker's place, he made a statement in writing. The opening paragraph was: "I have been approached at different times by parties who intimated that I could make money by allowing the roll-call on what is known as the Mueller bill or permit its passage." Instantly motion was made to appoint a committee to investigate the charges. As representatives of the house revolutionists, the following six were appointed: Thomas Rinaker, M. L. McKinley, John C. McManaman, W. F. Bundy, E. D. Shurtleff and William Trautman. No showing was made that any one wanted to pay Miller to allow the house majority its constitutional rights.

On top of this explosion in the house came news that the Union Traction Company had gone into the hands of receivers. Cole in Springfield was interviewed. "The opponents of the Mueller bill are glad to grasp at any straw to beat it," he said. "The Union Traction Company has been practically bankrupt for a year past, and I am not surprised at the news. Yerkes sold

the company a gold brick and the stockholders have been trying to get out from under ever since. It cannot possibly affect pending traction legislation. As a matter of fact, Chicago is here to fight for constitutional rights of the members. She is willing to go down to defeat upon the question of whether or not the members are to have roll-calls when demanded by a constitutional number of them."

The general consensus of opinion was expressed by the *Daily News* the day following the riot. It said, "Such an utter rout of boss rule and gag rule in the name of decency and constitutional rights has not been in Illinois in many a day."

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE LEGISLATURE REDEEMED

THE goats of the battered house organization were duly marked in the sixteen-page pamphlet of facts published by the Legislative Voters' League before the next spring's primaries. There were twenty-four of them in Cook County, including some senators of the same stripe, and but ten were renominated. On the other hand, all of the revolutionists who would accept were renamed. Five declined, five were named for other offices and one had died.

The election placed enough strong men in the house to attack with success the vicious payroll. The bill to provide for contingent expenses including payroll is about the first thing to be considered. As soon as passed, the work of payoff commences. In the early days of the session a host of apparently unattached individuals are loafing in the lobbies. They are there to get on the payroll.

Among them in the preceding session was a young colored attorney holding a political job in Mound City. A conversation reported with him revealed that he was not there in the interest of any particular legislation but that he "just came down to get on the payroll." He was asked in what particular capacity he wanted

to serve the state. "Oh," he said, "'most anything. Want to get it fixed up so I can get away. I got some business to do in St. Louis." Forty days elapsed and the young man drew his job and he and all applicants received back pay for the time they had waited. Rice — that was his name — became assistant superintendent of ventilation, in charge of three windows on one side of the house. If the session had lasted into warm weather he might have had to raise them.

Another patient waiter in that session became watchman. He had been a traveling salesman — had sold horsewhips. This was no longer an occupation. A reporter with a sense of humor described his duties: "Donathan went faithfully to work at 10:00 A. M. and sat with a bunch of cronies in the capital rotunda and watched. He watched his cigar smoke as it wafted upward, spread and disappeared. He watched the dancing of the superheated atmosphere. He watched the frescoed ceiling and safeguarded the frescoes until noon. He came back and worked until four. He was a great watcher."

Ninety-three janitors and seventy policemen formed a portion of the four hundred and twelve jobs paid out of the fund.

Cole attacked this corruption by bulletins and in the press. Again he was crying from the housetops. Old heads said, "This is not news. It always has been and you can't do anything." But the new men and the honest holdovers in the session of 1905 put their heads together. They resisted the bill for incidental expenses until the payroll was cut to two hundred and eleven — not enough but a good compromise. They passed a bill placing



nineteen hundred state employees under civil service, improved the primary law, created the municipal court abolishing the vicious justice-of-the-peace system, gave the city some additional powers — notably to regulate the price of gas and light — and gave the Sanitary District the right to sell its surplus electricity to private consumers. They passed an anti-policy gambling law and a loan shark law, clipping the ten-per-cent-a-month loan man. All these reforms had vigorous opposition. The legislature was pronounced the best Illinois had had in years.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### REFORM COUNCIL REFORMS POLICE

COLE retained his unbroken connection with the Citizens' Association by remaining on the executive committee. Mr. Louis Seeberger was now president, and Shelby M. Singleton secretary. The City Council had steadily improved in character. Police administration was inefficient. So Cole was asked to urge the City Council to reform the police department. A Council committee was appointed with Ernst F. Hermann at its head to hear under oath testimony upon which to base recommendations to Mayor Harrison. The Union League Club, William Kent, Victor Lawson and other individuals backed the Citizens' Association with funds.

The City Club, just organized, joined in. On December 5, 1903, this new force came into Chicago's civic life. The purposes of the club, stated in a call, were "simply to bring together in informal association as many as possible of those men who sincerely desire to meet the full measure of their responsibility as citizens." The call was signed by Walter L. Fisher, George E. Hooker, Frank H. Scott, Allan B. Pond, George E. Cole, Louis A. Seeberger and Alfred L. Baker. The list of one hundred and

seventy-four charter members included most of the officers and directors of the three fighting reform bodies. At the organization meeting, Ernst F. Hermann, chairman of the investigating committee, and Brode B. Davis, its counsel, detailed police conditions already exposed.

Following this meeting the City Club, backed by funds furnished by Charles R. Crane, brought on Captain Alexander Piper of New York on advice of District Attorney William Travers Jerome of New York, and the word "Piperizing" was added to the dictionary. It meant a system of inspection of police conditions and of records and the surveillance of patrolmen on duty to reveal the real inner workings of the force. The Piperizing showed existence of a gross lack of discipline. Loafing, "holing in" and drinking when patrolmen should have been on patrol duty were so prevalent as to be the rule rather than the exception. The time, place and nature of the infraction of the rules and the star numbers of the offenders were reported and published.

Evidence of infractions that amounted to criminal offenses were presented to the Council committee. State's Attorney Deneen's assistance was enlisted and he assigned his assistant Harry Olson to cooperate in any criminal proceedings recommended by the committee. Olson sifted facts down for the Grand Jury. Indictments were returned against patrolmen for assault, levying tribute on prostitutes and upon slot-machine owners, for theft, for shoplifting, for bribery, for conducting confidence games and for obstructing justice.

The trial board of the Civil Service Commission was called

upon to perform services with an ax. Many dismissals followed. It was necessary to institute proceedings against police who used their power to intimidate witnesses and to whom use of perjured testimony was part of their day's work.

And these were mere incidents of the lack of morale. The facts disclosed that the patrolmen knew and could and would close every illegal joint and criminal den on their beats if they were not compelled to read between the lines of their orders.

It was found that Chief O'Neill did not control his own force nor Mayor Harrison the Chief. Orders came from persons who controlled the various forms of gambling and prostitution. The fund to support organized crime ran into millions. Policy gambling alone was worth five million a year, race-track gambling and bookmaking another three and a half million. Bets were estimated to reach tens of millions. Gambling dens, prostitution and dope-selling added another million. All, of course, were operated under paid protection, and this fund supported the vice ring. The city was parceled out to the vice lords in divisions. Tom McGinnis controlled gambling on the near south side and Bill Lewis, a recognized professional bondsman, prostitution. Policy gambling belonged to Patsy King (no relation to Hoyt King) and prostitution in a limited territory on the west side was levied on by the police direct. Officers Walter Bullis and John J. Fitzmaurice were indicted on the charge. Mont Tennes owned north side gambling privileges, and the stock yards district was operated by Jim O'Leary.

Before the investigation could be completed there occurred,

on December 30, the Iroquois Theater fire, wiping out the lives of five hundred and seventy-five patrons, mostly children. The people, the administrative departments, the council and the newspapers, moved by the horror of this disaster, turned their attention to an investigation, and to providing adequate protection against any possible repetition of such a holocaust.

Police were forgotten. Surviving the intensive campaign was one outstanding revelation: the patrolman could wipe out crime on his beat if protected from the vice ring and its agents in political office. He could be protected from the crooked politician by the people through an organized body that would demand that he clean up his beat and that would protect him and even force his promotion for meritorious service.

To this end the Citizens' Association cooperated with the police. In the following year "policy" shops were wiped out, the keepers indicted and several convicted. Race-track gambling was suppressed in the city but not in the county. Sheriff Thomas E. Barrett failed to cooperate. In 1905, with the help of State's Attorney John J. Healy and the Grand Jury, race-track gambling in the sheriff's territory was practically ended — for the time being.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### ATTACKS A "CARNIVAL OF THIEVERY"

AT THE END of the 1907 campaign Cole retired from the presidency of the Legislative Voters' League. He was succeeded by Mr. Clifford W. Barnes, organizer and president of the Sunday Evening Club.

Meantime he had remained one of the directors of the Citizens' Association. County affairs in 1905 had again absorbed him. He found the county institutions were being better manned. Knowing one's own name and address, how many days there were in the week, how many weeks in the month and how many months in the year was no longer sufficient educational foundation to qualify for the care of the poor, the sick and the insane. But information came to Secretary Shelby M. Singleton of the Citizens' Association that all was not well in the county administrative offices not under civil service. Padding of payrolls in a fee office was directly charged by one of the employees of the Superior Court clerk's office. That padding of payrolls was a practice in other fee offices was hinted at. The fee offices partly supported by fees charged for services were the offices of the clerks of the courts — Circuit, Superior, County, Criminal and Probate. Other



fee offices later included in investigations were the offices of Recorder, Sheriff, Coroner and County Clerk.

It was the same old story. "I had planted my foot in the mud in one place," said Cole, "and squeezed it out into another place. The boys who couldn't pass a civil service examination were being crowded into the offices not under civil service." So to Cole was delegated the work of correcting another bad situation. He was made chairman of a committee to investigate the fee offices. The final revelations of an estimated loss of millions to the county started with a very small beginning. The evidence in the county boodle cases in 1887 started by J. Frank Aldrich's discovery of some unpaid and padded bills and grew into the discovery of wholesale looting of the public treasury. So now other men were to be punished for like offenses — not indirect but direct stealing of payroll money and fees due the county running into thousands of dollars.

The specific proof, so frequently a slight matter in the beginning of an investigation, came about in this way. Complaint had been made by an attorney for James J. Healy, of payroll stuffing and theft of fees in the office of Superior Court Clerk John A. Linn. Under Cole's direction, Secretary Singleton undertook a task that unearthed proof of a steal of \$65,447 and an estimate that ran it up to \$200,000, in two fee offices.

"Beyond question, millions of dollars have been wasted in addition to the millions that have been stolen in the county offices in the last thirty years," Cole's report says.

Colonel Healy had for many years been chief clerk in the

Superior Court Clerk's office but was excluded from its financial management. In signing the payroll in November, 1901, he had noted five names of persons who had not worked in the office. This was the starting point. It grew to thirty names of persons who had not worked in the office. In few instances had they signed the payroll or endorsed the pay warrants. During a series of years this had been done by one Frank J. Chaizer, Linn's bookkeeper and cashier. Now, this discovery was not shouted from the housetops nor submitted to an investigating grand jury. Instead, Mr. Chaizer was visited at his home at night, where, convinced that the "jig was up," he admitted he had sworn to false payrolls on order of John A. Linn and deposited the pay warrants with forged endorsements to Linn's credit in bank.

The wisdom of visiting Chaizer at once was proved during the evening. The doorbell rang. Linn had sent a messenger summoning Chaizer to his house a few doors away. Chaizer hesitatingly replied that he could not come that night because he was sick. Then, closing the door, he turned, trembling, to the investigator and said, "That is the first time in my life I ever disobeyed an order from John Linn."

But that was not the end. He had hardly pledged to lay bare to the Grand Jury all the facts within his knowledge when the doorbell rang again and John A. Linn himself walked in. But Linn was too late.

Two months from the time Cole's investigation was started the first witness went before the Grand Jury. Chaizer, sick and at West Baden, was again approached by an agent of Linn and

offered a sum of money to stay out of Illinois. He refused. His testimony with that of other witnesses was submitted to the Grand Jury by State's Attorney John J. Healy and Linn was indicted, charged with forgery, embezzlement of fees and conspiracy. On trial before Judge George A. Dupuy, he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a term of from one to five years in the penitentiary. His proven peculation amounted to \$31,543, but the amount stolen was estimated at exceeding \$100,000. Linn made restitution of the provable amount a few months later. After he had served twenty-one months the Citizens' Association backed his family's petition for parole. The Association was satisfied that he was in danger of becoming insane.

The investigation of Linn's office was only well under way when Cole directed that conditions be examined in the office of John A. Cooke, clerk of the Circuit Court. Inside facts were not the starting point here. But fifty names were found to have been receipted for each month in the handwriting of Charles H. Bradley, chief clerk, and the salary warrants endorsed by him. Bradley seemed to be playing the same role as Chaizer under Linn. Also forty or fifty cases were discovered where fees paid in had not been accounted for. Bradley was faced with the facts and was defiant. The evidence was laid before State's Attorney Healy. Bradley was called in and confronted with the evidence. He broke down and made a clean breast of matters within his knowledge.

Three months after the Linn indictments Cooke was indicted. He was tried before Judge Ben M. Smith and found guilty of

defrauding the county. His total thefts amounted to \$77,482.56. Cooke carried his case to the Appellate and Supreme Courts of the state and, failing there, appealed to the United States Supreme Court for a writ of supersedeas and again failed. He began serving his time in January, 1908 — a year and a half after being sentenced. He, too, was pardoned subsequently at Mr. Cole's instance.

Then shortages were discovered in the office of Probate clerk and restitution made. The upheaval resulted in the appointment by President Edward J. Brundage of the county board of an official investigating committee consisting of George F. Steele, Charles D. Richards, Frederick Greeley and County Commissioners Edwin K. Walker, William Busse and John P. Garner. Their work was more of a corrective nature and resulted in employment of public accountants to recommend a thorough revision of the bookkeeping and accounting systems in the fee offices.

The net result was an enormous increase in the fee receipts of the county. The following year netted an increase of \$400,000. Cole's investigating committee in its published report summed up the condition that had existed in the two county fee offices investigated as a "carnival of thievery."

Another great saving in county expenditures resulted from a very simple and practical suggestion made by Mr. Cole and reported by Mr. Robert Catherwood, former president of the Chicago Civil Service Association, as having attracted attention in far-away London. Sir Stanley Leathes, K.C.B., commissioner of civil service, London, publicly remarked that "Several useful

plans now in operation in our service originated in America, among them one inaugurated by Mr. George E. Cole of Chicago." In Sir Stanley's address he explained our practice of loading with political workers the payrolls of the offices having to do with assessment, extension and collection of taxes. The assessment and the review of assessment were over in January; the extension in the county clerk's office was completed in February; and the heavy work of the treasurer in collecting was fairly over by June — yet practically full staffs were maintained in these offices, even after the pressure was released.

Mr. Cole suggested that by pushing such seasonal arrangements to the utmost the regular staff of each of these departments could be greatly reduced and their work done by a comparatively small staff, moving from department to department. His suggestion was adopted in the county and resulted in a large saving; also the work was better done because of the wide experience of the members of the movable staff. In concluding his address, Sir Stanley said, "The plan, while not entirely new, was widely adopted and has been developed and applied to analogous situations. It is one of the debts which the British Civil Service owes to her American daughter."

Meantime Cole was suffering loss of customers due to political antagonism. He had a good organization of old and faithful employees, but his personal attention was needed. Fortunately his son, Theodore, was to step in. Theo was endowed with unusually sound judgment, and a good constitution. He carried on for two years. Then, attacked by lassitude not natural to him, he be-



gan to decline in health. Nothing more serious than needed rest was suspected, after a doctor's examination, and he was sent to Florida. He came back showing no improvement, and a thorough examination followed. His ailment was diagnosed as tuberculosis. Open air and a health-building diet were prescribed. Cole sold his home on Grand Boulevard and moved his family to Wilmette. On Greenwood Avenue he found a home and on the south built a spacious sunroom. Here, greeting friends with his enduring cheerfulness, Theo lay through the snow of winter, the budding spring and into the summer, till one day the young and promising life ended. This was a crushing blow to the father. His sturdy constitution withstood the shock. Again he was at the desk of Cole & Company. His second son, Munroe, was too young to step into the harness.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### FINDS BASIC LAW WRONG

**H**IS wide experience with maladministration in township, city, county and state affairs had now brought Cole to one conclusion. Again he considered whether he had made a false start. There was so much the matter with government; it needed basic remedies.

Cole's next fight was for a constitutional convention. He plunged in. Though not an official of the Citizens' Association prior to 1901, he was familiar with its efforts for constitutional revision. 'Way back in 1884, fourteen years after the constitution was adopted, under John L. Thompson as president, the Association stated its belief that "a fundamental change in the system of local government of Cook County, or at least that portion which applies to Chicago and the towns immediately adjoining it, is necessary." It could be brought about only by a constitutional convention. Even at that time the extraordinary growth of the city and suburbs since the convention of 1870 and the changed relation to the rest of the state in population and wealth were given as reasons for change of provisions that were sufficient for government of rural districts and small communities. The Asso-

ciation had sought a resolution for a constitutional amendment in the preceding legislature without success.

In 1887, under President Francis B. Peabody, a resolution for amendment permitting special legislation for Cook County failed. The report of President Peabody stated: "Any proposed alteration designed for our relief is always met by one from some other section of the state for some other object."

So in 1891 a resolution for submitting to the people the question whether a convention should be held was introduced in the legislature. It was defeated. But the legislature submitted to a vote a resolution to permit two amendments at a time instead of but one as fixed in the constitution of 1870. If adopted it was proposed to use the two amendments to bring about a consolidation of the city and county governments. This too failed when submitted to the people.

In 1893 a resolution for a constitutional convention failed. In 1895 a resolution to permit three amendments to the constitution at one time passed the legislature and was submitted to a vote in 1896. It was defeated.

In 1898 a proposed constitutional amendment to enable the city and county to consolidate failed.

With this history in mind, Cole started toward accomplishment of another forlorn hope — a revision of the state constitution to bring it down to date. Cole was president of the Citizens' Association, having been re-elected in 1911. He re-enlisted the interest of the Citizens' Association directors. They gave him full swing and backed him.

When it was evident the legislature would not submit to the people any of the resolutions proposing constitutional amendments presented to them in 1912, a joint resolution for a constitutional convention was submitted by the Citizens' Association under Cole's leadership. It was defeated in the house. The pressing need then and now and since 1884 when first broached by the Citizens' Association was and is: revision of the taxation system; consolidation of local taxing bodies; reduction in the number of elective offices; and home rule.

The Chicago Bureau of Public Efficiency noted that there were nineteen distinct governing bodies in Chicago; that at the November election in 1912 fifty-seven officials were to be voted for; that there were altogether 236 local elective officials; that the number local, state and national totaled 368. As many as 170 candidates would appear for fifty-six offices at a single primary election. The archaic personal property tax, so unjust as to be unenforcible, must needs be abolished and some method devised to levy a just tax on intangible property or the income from it. This would tend to relieve the homeowner, upon whom the burden was getting very heavy.

For forty years the door had been closed to amending the constitution by: the restriction to a single amendment at a time; the requirement of a two-thirds vote in each house before an amendment could be submitted to the people and by requiring that it receive a majority of all the votes cast at the election. This made a failure to vote on the amendment a vote against it. The amendment, submitted to a vote in 1896, received 163,000 votes

for and 66,000 against, and still was defeated. The total vote in the state that year was 1,090,000. Thus the 861,000 voters who cast ballots but did not vote on the proposition defeated it.

In this year of 1912, Ohio cities had been released from bondage. Of forty-one amendments to the constitution of Ohio submitted to the people, all but eight were adopted. To Brand Whitlock of Toledo home rule for cities was of crowning importance. "And the people did approve, with vast majorities, and among all the principles of democracy they wrote in their fundamental law that day was that of municipal home rule, so that all those cities, undreamed of when the old constitution had been written, and all those little towns, silent and sleepy in the drowse of that Sunday afternoon, might own and operate their public utilities, might draft their own charters, have that form of government they pleased, in short, become free. And so the great dreams of Johnson ('Tom') and Jones ('Golden Rule') came true at last."

Ohio's success inspired hope that Illinois might now be ready to bring itself also down to date. So Cole and his committee, in order to make state-wide the campaign for a constitutional convention, set about organizing the Constitutional Convention League of Illinois. Cole was elected chairman of the League. He was now sixty-six. He perhaps did not at the time know he had laid out for himself a job that was to require all the bulldog tenacity he had displayed in his earlier work. It was to be a ten-year campaign, ending on December 12, 1922, with a special election to adopt a new constitution.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### STARTS FIGHT FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

THE League proceeded with powerful help from leading newspapers. More than 300 of the 386 legislative nominees of the various political parties throughout the state signified their willingness, if elected, to vote in favor of submitting to the people the question of calling a constitutional convention. The platforms of all parties declared for constitutional revision. Mr. Cole and Secretary Singleton were credited with the most of the work that brought about these results.

But again, as had occurred on two previous trials in the preceding twenty-eight years, the joint resolution submitting to the people the matter of holding a convention was defeated in the house, after passing the senate. With twenty-nine members absent or not voting, it failed by only ten votes to receive the two-thirds required by law. To Cole it was just another battle of the war lost. He was now vice-president of the Citizens' Association. It was typical of Cole that its report of results was headed "Convention Deferred." The outcome was called a temporary defeat.

Seventeen members of the house who had given assurances they would support the resolution either opposed it or failed to vote.



Nine of these were from Cook County and had violated a written pledge. This breach of faith made something for Cole to live for.

All Europe was now aflame with war and President Wilson busy keeping us out of it. In spite of the distraction, in the following year Cole was busy forming another organization. It may not have been larger than the Constitutional Convention League, but its name was longer. The name was "State-Wide Constitutional Advisory Committee of the Citizens' Association." The committee was composed of sixty-nine members, including judges, congressmen, members of the legislature, the mayor, the two United States senators (Lawrence Y. Sherman and James Hamilton Lewis) and merchants and lawyers. Chicago and its suburbs were represented by forty-three members. The rest came from twenty-six towns in the state at large. Cole was chairman.

Political leaders were at once consulted. Both the republican and democratic parties at their conventions adopted strong planks for action by the General Assembly to secure the calling of a constitutional convention. Cole got in touch with Governor Frank O. Lowden, elected on this platform and just inaugurated, and tendered his services. The governor expressed his gratification and said: "This program was the basis of our campaign. It must be carried out if we are to retain the confidence of the people. Party pledges must be held as sacred as obligations incurred in other fields." Governor Lowden had received a tremendous popular vote, and this was looked upon as an unmistakable mandate to the General Assembly to further the principal reforms advocated by him during the campaign. The memorable victory that



followed was the fruition of work begun a third of a century before and carried on vigorously by Cole for the preceding five years. The resolution carried by 47 to 1 in the senate and 112 to 30 in the house.

To Governor Lowden's strenuous efforts at a critical time the final adoption of the convention resolution in the house was credited by Cole, and he added in a letter, "If we can but commemorate Illinois' centennial year by carrying the proposition for a constitutional convention by a popular vote your administration assuredly will deserve an illustrious page in the history of our state."

The final passage was aided by a woman's lobby, led by Mrs. Grace Wilbur Trout, Mrs. J. W. McGraw, Mrs. Catherine Waugh McCullough, Mrs. DeWitt J. Garrison and others. Roger C. Sullivan for the democrats and Senator Medill McCormick for the republicans were active lobbyists for the resolution. Julius Rosenwald and many civic organizations and most of the leading newspapers splendidly supported the convention resolution.

It was expected to submit the proposal to the voters at the November election, 1918; if adopted, to elect delegates in the fall of 1919 and be able to adopt a new constitution in the spring or fall of 1920. It proved to be another five years before final action. The hope was that it might be submitted in the form of separate amendments, as was done in Ohio, so that each of the various proposals would stand or fall on its merits, thus avoiding rejection of the bulk of the convention's work.

The opening gun in the campaign for adoption was fired at Springfield. At a preliminary meeting held in Governor Lowden's office in the state capitol building, the nucleus of a non-partisan campaign organization was formed with Judge Orrin N. Carter, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Illinois, as chairman. The invitations were sent out by Cole to the active supporters of the movement. Those present regarded themselves remarkably fortunate in securing Judge Carter's consent to lead the campaign. Cole served with him on the committee. The proposition carried by a majority of 74,239 on November 5, just six days before the armistice that declared the end of the World War.

And now Cole was to suffer another domestic tragedy. Mrs. Cole had not been a particularly strong woman, though in good health. The loss of Theodore had been a severe shock to her, philosophical though she was. There had been no warning to cause any real anxiety about her physical condition. Just three days after Cole's victory at the polls Mrs. Cole suffered a stroke and sank into a coma. This was in the daytime and Mr. Cole was at his office. He hastened home as quickly as possible. Mrs. Cole never recovered consciousness. That evening painlessly and peacefully she slipped away from him. No one but Cole knows how much he owed to the patience of a wife who would give up so much that he might pay what he considered was his debt to the public. It was for Mrs. Cole that he had refrained from attending public meetings at night and had been able to spend most of his evenings at home. He was now to go it alone.

## CHAPTER XXX

### CONVENTION DRAFTS NEW CONSTITUTION

ARMISTICE DAY found Cole again at his desk at George E. Cole & Company's. He was vice-president of the Citizens' Association. It was highly desirable that the one hundred and two delegates now to be chosen be elected, if possible, on a non-partisan basis. In Ohio, by special act of the legislature, delegates were nominated by petition only, and the ballots bore no party label. As a result, many high-grade men were led to become candidates.

To determine if such an act would be consistent with our constitution the Citizens' Association submitted the question to a group of lawyers. They were Charles R. Holden, John P. Wilson, John S. Miller, S. S. Gregory, Levy Mayer, Silas H. Strawn, Frederick B. Johnstone and Clarence Darrow, all members of the Association. The group was not unanimous that such an act would be constitutional. Most of the members agreed that there was enough doubt to make it inexpedient to pursue the Ohio method. An advance opinion could not be had from the Supreme Court. It was certain the legislature would not pass an act in time for the Supreme Court to review it before the election.

It was with much regret that Cole and his co-workers found

that they would have to adhere to the party plan. They knew that whether Illinois would become a better place in which to live depended upon the average caliber of its delegates. The non-partisan selection of delegates in Ohio and Massachusetts had resulted satisfactorily. The New York convention, elected on party lines, had resulted in the overwhelming defeat of its proposed new constitution when submitted to the voters. The people of Illinois must now depend on their party leaders to nominate and elect fit men in the various districts.

The vital issue was at last in the hands of the people. After so many years a celebration might have been justifiable, with flags out and torchlight processions and brass bands, for the proposition carried.

It was a victory for Cole. He had now worked nearly eight years to bring about the issue. Was it to be a barren victory? The *Tribune* summed it up this way: "This state may or may not get a new constitution. After many years of discouraged effort it has at last and at last elected delegates to the convention and the convention will begin its work. The campaign for the convention required perseverance and resolution. . . . You may have forgotten who was the pioneer. He was George E. Cole. A reader suggests that it is a good thing to hand a man a bouquet once in a while if he deserves it, and that Mr. Cole does. We agree with him. This is not a bouquet. Maybe it will pass for a small flower. It is for Mr. Cole's buttonhole."

Some outstanding lawyers, business men and political leaders of good standing were elected. But on the whole the partisan

method put in too many who viewed the convention work through political spectacles. The *Tribune*, a staunch advocate of constitutional revision, became disaffected. It was not pleased with the makeup, and on June 23, 1920, it commented editorially to the effect "that the state will continue to operate under the constitution of '70. It has many defects but they will be preferred." The *Tribune* regretted a parting of the ways with Cole, whom it proclaimed the "grandfather of the convention."

Cole and his co-workers began immediately a bombardment of the convention members. The first shot was directed against a proposal adopted by the convention to limit Chicago's representation in the legislature so that it would never have a majority in either house or senate. A protest signed by Moses E. Greenebaum, president, and George E. Cole, vice-president, of the Citizens' Association, directed to Charles E. Woodward, president of the convention, was sent. The convention rescinded the action to limit Chicago in both houses. Next a bulletin was sent urging the convention to abolish the cumulative vote for representatives that enabled the parties to nominate for the legislature only three members in a district that was to elect only three.

The Citizens' Association appealed to the convention to cut down the number of elective offices, as a material aid to good government in Chicago, and closed with the statement, "In our judgment, submission of the proposed constitution as a single proposal will be almost certain to result in rejection by the people."

Next an assault was made to secure provision for consolidation of the courts of Cook County. This was contained in a



stirring letter to Frederick R. De Young, chairman of the judiciary committee. The courts were charged with non-administration of justice. "An indictment," it said, "by the Cook County Grand Jury is regarded by the average criminal as a mere inconvenience." Adoption was urged of a proposal made by Frank J. Loesch, chairman, and Walter F. Dodds, secretary, of a committee of lawyers, to consolidate into a single body all the courts of Cook County, headed by a chief justice to be selected by the Supreme Court.

Elected in November, 1919, organized in January, 1920, the convention finally submitted its work to the ratification of the voters at a special election in December, 1922. It was not an ideal constitution; it was a compromise. The proposals sought and vigorously fought for by Cole and the directors of the Citizens' Association were incorporated. Chicago was to have home rule and was authorized to call a charter convention; provision was made for consolidating the taxing bodies; Cook County courts were to be consolidated with 71 judges, each having equal and complete jurisdiction in criminal and civil cases, and the Supreme Court to choose the chief justice, make assignments to the civil and criminal bench and prescribe rules of pleading, practice and procedure; the cumulative voting system used in electing state representatives was to be abandoned; the legislature was empowered to substitute a tax upon incomes from intangible property for the archaic and unenforcible personal property tax, relieving to some extent the homeowner of the unjust burden that falls on real estate.



Cook County's representation in the house was to be unrestricted. Its representation in the senate was to be limited to one-third.

General Abel Davis, a member of the convention, said of the proposed constitution, "The greatest change in the new constitution is the grant to Chicago of the right of home rule. It may write its own charter; it may pass its own laws of local significance; it may settle its own transportation problem without appealing to the state; it may own and operate the means of local transportation; it may own the same and operate through a lessee; grant or renew franchises; it may do either, neither or nothing; and whatever is to be decided upon, we ourselves make the decision."

Judge Orrin N. Carter, in accepting the chairmanship of the state campaign committee for ratification, said, "The high character of the personnel of the convention has impressed all thoughtful citizens with confidence in the result of their efforts to bring about a revision of the basic law of the state. I believe that the proposed new constitution is a great improvement upon the constitution of 1870."

The Citizens' Association said, "While in our own opinion the new constitution might have been improved in some respects, we are aware that such a document is necessarily the result of compromise, and we are fully convinced that it offers the people enormously important gains."

Cole, now honorary president of the Citizens' Association, addressed a letter to Judge Carter stating, "As one of those who for years carried on the tedious and uphill fight to induce the

legislature to submit the calling of the convention to the people, I do not hesitate to say that failure to ratify this constitution will end all chance of getting relief through a constitutional convention for at least twenty years."

It was unfortunate that the new constitution was not all that everybody wanted. Limiting Cook County's representation in the senate was resented by many. Others feared the proposed income tax. These and all objectors to any provision or to failure to provide for their pet idea voted against the document as a whole. The new constitution was rejected.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### PROCLAIMED STATE'S GREATEST PUBLIC SERVANT

**I**F this were fiction our story might end now with "Little remains to be said," but it is Cole's story. For several years honorary president, Cole was in 1923 acting president in the absence of Mr. Augustus B. Peabody. Mr. Peabody had served continuously as president of the Citizens' Association since 1920 and was to serve for many years to come.

In the Association's annual report for that year appears Cole's brief statement of the outcome of his long fight for constitutional revision: "We were not greatly surprised by the overwhelming defeat of the proposed new constitution when it was submitted to the voters last December by the constitutional convention. That convention, which was called into existence by the people of the state, largely through our efforts, had been elected on partisan lines despite our protest and so probably did not receive as large a measure of public confidence as it might have had if the delegates had been chosen on a non-partisan basis. Its deliberations were overshadowed by the unsettled conditions which prevailed immediately after the World War, and at the close of its sessions the constitutional convention made the fatal mistake of submitting

the proposed new constitution as an entirety instead of permitting the voters to adopt or reject each important proposal separately."

It would naturally take some time for a man, even of Cole's dogged persistency, to get over the bitter loss of that battle. It would seem to many the loss of the war. It was seven years before Cole's next move. Though eighty-five years of age, he was again agitating the basic needs of the state: home rule; the short ballot; unification of local governments; reform of the tax system; and consolidation of the Cook County courts.

In a letter to Senator Harold C. Kessinger of Aurora, Illinois, he says: "I have been much pleased to learn that you hold the view that Illinois should take steps to call another constitutional convention in the near future, as the only practical means of accomplishing improvements in our local and state governmental machinery. As one who has given much time and effort to this cause and who has long held the opinion that the convention method is the best if not the only one by which these highly desirable changes can be effected, I have been extremely glad to hear of late that thoughtful men in different parts of the state are again doing what they can to promote discussion of this important matter."

In closing his letter, Cole assigns to the public one task, so far unable to complete, to the accomplishment of which he at least shows the way: "In my opinion, public-spirited citizens of Illinois now have an opportunity to perform a patriotic service by urging the calling of another constitutional convention as the only feasible plan for accomplishing such reforms as those above mentioned, that are essential to the welfare of the state."

And Senator Kessinger published this appeal in his *Mid-West Review* and paid Cole this tribute: "If asked to name the Illinois private citizen who is the state's greatest public servant your mind would consider with all other names, and perhaps ahead of all others, George E. Cole, of Chicago, veteran fighter for good government, city and state."

And the *Chicago Tribune* immediately joined editorially: "George E. Cole, one of the most disinterested and level-headed of the men who, in our local history, have worked for political reform and good government, makes appeal for the calling of another constitutional convention. Any appeal made or backed by Mr. Cole deserves respectful consideration, and there is much to be said for a constitutional convention."

And other papers throughout the state joined in this appeal of Mr. Cole, octogenarian.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE END

AND so Cole filled the requirements of leadership summed up by Lyman J. Gage thirty-five years before, when Cole was placed at the head of a movement to clean up a Council "unparalleled in the sublimity of its infamy."

He proved to be devoted, pure, honest, without political ambition and possessed of courage, industry, patience and ability to take a good deal of calumny. And in the stocky body below the head that bore the bulldog jaw, there beat a kindly heart that won him the love of those who fought with him; and his honesty and courage won the admiration of many who opposed him.

The writer speaks of him from an intimacy that began with his fight to clean up his own ward — an intimacy that continued uninterrupted for thirty-five years. He had faith in the honesty of the great majority of the voters and he inspired their confidence in him. He achieved his successes through vigorous attacks on one evil at a time, and he fought each fight to a successful conclusion. His successes placed in public life men of merit who still serve, and he established policies that are still observed. He told the truth bluntly and sometimes sacrificed a friendship.



He stood to the front to receive the attack and the denunciation of opponents and to ward off attacks on his co-workers and subordinates. He did not butt up against political stone walls, for to him there seemed to be no political stone walls.

When he renewed his appeal for a constitutional convention his health was such that many hoped he might yet live to win the war for a revision of our basic law. Suddenly, on a day in July of the year in which he renewed his fight, the warrior was stricken. He lingered, conscious at times, and with occasional flashes of that prevailing humor which marked his life and which could not be suppressed even in the face of death. On August 18, in his eighty-fifth year, the unseen and expected Hand beckoned to him, and his spirit followed it out of the world in which he found so much to do — so much yet to be done.

# TRIBUTE



## TRIBUTE

A MEMORIAL meeting commemorating the public service of George E. Cole was held October 19, 1930, at the City Club of Chicago. Professor Graham Taylor presided. He presented the speakers, whose estimate of Mr. Cole's character and work is in part here set out.

### MR. J. FRANK ALDRICH:

I haven't any doubt whatever that after George Cole had early witnessed the raping of the ballot boxes in Chicago and the growing corruption in our city and county governments, he made mental note of it, and vowed that if the chance ever did come to him to hit at civic corruption in Chicago he would hit it and hit it hard. We all know how well he succeeded.

"George E. Cole," said the *Times-Herald* in the spring of 1896, "is regarded by municipal thieves and political sharks as a rare type of reformer. To the ordinary reformer, boodlers and their backers pay but little attention—they scoff at him and jeer at him. They don't scoff or jeer at Mr. Cole, but they hate him. And why? Simply because he hurts them. He is a rare type."

"The typical bad citizen of Chicago," said Mr. Cole on November 13, 1899, "is that man who is a good husband, a good neighbor, a charitable man who gives to churches and charity, who is fairly honest in his everyday dealings, but who will form one of a pool to put up the money to purchase the vote of a councilman or legislator for the acquirement of a franchise."

His chief characteristic was honesty of thought, word and deed, and he was as modest as he was brave. He considered it his duty to love his country, support its Constitution, obey its laws, respect its flag, and defend it against all enemies. To paraphrase a couplet which referred to Lincoln:

A better man there never was;  
An humbler one there will never be.

And as we look back at George E. Cole we say, "What a masterpiece of God was he!"

## MR. HOYT KING:

I was introduced to Mr. George E. Cole in 1895. I was conducted up the stairway of a building on Dearborn Street to the balcony of George E. Cole & Company, where he had his desk. He accepted me on sight for secretary of the Fourth Ward Council of the Civic Federation. He was a printer and stationer. He had never dabbled in politics other than to vote regularly.

One of his first acts as head of the Municipal Voters' League was in reference to the newspapers. The newspapers must not be used to exploit members of the League. *News* was to be given to the press — not claims of what Cole was going to do. He did not *know* what he was going to do. He built his plans to suit circumstances. He took things as they were, and used the law and the machinery of election as he found them. I was amazed at his ready grasp of the situation. I have sat at a committee table and have heard him analyze the situation ward by ward in thirty-four wards. He would tell who should be defeated, who was a good candidate, who was a candidate not so good but who might be used to defeat a known boddler, and point out where an independent candidacy could be fostered. He could predict the probable result — where we would win, and where after a good fight we would lose but drive the wedge for success in the following election.

I think he liked to fight, and the cause that he was engaged in was one in which he had every faith. His preparation was so thorough that his fight was frequently a short one. When Cole went before a grand jury his case was complete and the indictment a formality. He prepared his facts, backed by the affidavits of witnesses and by documentary proof, before he even went to the state's attorney, and then the matter was not submitted to the grand jury until little links of evidence suggested by the state's attorney were secured.

We know that the good he has done will not end with his passing. Mr. Cole has left a legacy to this generation, an example of civic patriotism, and this generation will do well to profit by knowledge of his motives, his methods, and the successes he achieved.

## MR. WALTER L. FISHER:

When George E. Cole retired from the presidency of the Municipal Voters' League it was not merely because he had already made as great a sacrifice as his personal circumstances justified, but because he was in real doubt as to the possibilities of the future development of the League beyond the point to which he had brought it. Whatever those possibilities were, he thought that new men and new methods were essential if its usefulness was to be continued and en-

larged. This modest, civic soldier did not realize how completely he had already established the essential principles upon which the League was to achieve all of its subsequent successes. Adaptation of method to changing conditions there undoubtedly was, but the fundamentals remained unshaken. Honesty, courage and common sense coupled with the absence of all personal animosity — these were the qualities which Cole had established in the Municipal Voters' League at its very beginning, and which he had so impressed upon it that they remained its distinguishing characteristic after he ceased to be its leader.

His first effort was to establish the confidence of the public in the honesty of himself and his organization, in its single-minded sincerity of purpose and its freedom from any taint of political or personal self-interest. In this he was singularly successful, and the real secret of this success was that sincerity of purpose and straightforwardness of method were the very essence of his own character. Unflinching courage in the statement of facts and the adoption and execution of policies was the essential supplement of honesty and sincerity. The third characteristic of Mr. Cole which he impressed upon the Municipal Voters' League was that uncommon thing called common sense — uncommon at least in movements for political reform. What we mean by common sense may be difficult to define, but we all have a very clear conception of what the words mean. To me they mean practicality — the quality of being capable of accomplishment at the time, as opposed to that which is theoretically desirable but not within the reach of actual attainment under the existent conditions. The application of common sense in public affairs always seems to the idealist to involve a sacrifice of ideals, and it does involve in every case the determination of whether we shall in the long run come nearer to the attainment of the ideal by adhering rigidly to it than by gradual ascent through the acceptance of the best that is immediately attainable.

George E. Cole was a rare character, whose unselfish services to this community can never be adequately recognized because they can never be adequately made known. To recall them in this memorial service and even in this fragmentary way is not only a duty but a privilege that should be an inspiration.

### MR. LESSING ROSENTHAL:

When I myself — and this was in the year 1902 — became a member of the Municipal Voters' League Committee and began actively to participate in its work, I got to know more and more about what George E. Cole had done not alone for the Municipal Voters' League but for the cleansing and upbuilding of the City of Chicago.

Mr. Cole at that time took every opportunity to speak to members of the



executive committee of the League when he chanced to meet them of the work they were doing, and this was particularly gratifying to the younger men — men like myself — who loved to hear his words of encouragement, loved to hear him tell of some of his own experiences, and loved to hear him speak in that very modest way of his of some of the things that had been done in the earlier years.

It was the following year, in 1903, that through the efforts especially of Walter L. Fisher, to whom you have just listened, the City Club of Chicago was formed. Mr. Cole, modest man that he was, never wished to hold office in this club. He was never even a director. He was later elected an honorary life member and kept this membership until death took him from us. But the fact that Mr. Cole did not hold an official position did not, by any means, mean that he was not active in the affairs of the club. In a way I have known of no one more active. No meeting at which any important public discussion took place or which was devoted to the consideration of any measure of real concern to the people was ever held at which George E. Cole, if he was in Chicago, did not appear and at which his counsel was not given and at which he did not express views that carried weight.

George E. Cole's life will ever remain an inspiring example. It is a wonderful thing that we had in him not only a man who in time of the Civil War was ready to die for his country but who after that war was over and he had returned to peaceful pursuits was ever ready to live for his country.

He who has studied history knows that republics have fallen, that states have become decadent and fallen and that corruption has played an important role in bringing about this end. Mr. Cole realized this. He wanted to preserve this city, this state and this country. He wanted the good work to go on and on, and he is responsible for much of it that is being done today and will be done hereafter. Mr. Cole's memory will remain immortal.

#### MR. HENRY P. CHANDLER:

I shall begin by reading in part a statement of the directors of the Citizens' Association:

"The Directors of the Citizens' Association of Chicago record their sorrow and deep sense of loss in the death of George E. Cole, the honorary president of the Association.

"He was born at Jackson, Michigan, on March 2, 1845, and served during the Civil War for two years as a private in the 10th Michigan Volunteer Infantry. He engaged in business in the City of Chicago in March, 1878, and was for a number of years president of the printing and stationery house of George E. Cole & Company.

"In the year 1896, he organized the Municipal Voters' League and became its first president. He was also active in the Legislative Voters' League, in the Initiative and Referendum League of Illinois and in other civic movements for the betterment of municipal and state government. He was one of the last surviving members of the George H. Thomas Post of the Grand Army of the Republic.

"He was a director of this Association for nearly thirty years, president in two different periods, from 1900 to 1902 and 1912 to 1914, vice-president from 1914 to 1920, and honorary president since 1920. Thus he has had an outstanding part in the life of the Association for a generation. He has caused the exposure and prevention of corrupt practices in government, and promoted efficiency and integrity. He has shown the need of far-reaching changes in governmental organization through a new constitution, and labored in season and out of season to secure popular support for it.

"More important than specific accomplishments, he has set an example of devotion, courage and self-sacrifice by which only can corruption and evil be overcome, and the public interest maintained. These qualities are peculiarly needed in the present time. His uprightness and sturdy integrity as a business man were apparent to the entire community. He was best known, however, as a good citizen and as a champion of the cause of honesty and civic virtue against all forms of corruption in public life. He fought the good fight until his name became synonymous with courage, high ideals and rugged patriotism.

"May his memory always be treasured and may the Citizens' Association remain forever faithful to the ideals for which he strove so unselfishly and so well."

To relate the work of Mr. Cole in the Citizens' Association would be almost to recount the history of the Association for a generation. There was little that it did in which he did not take an active part.

Mr. Cole's greatest contribution through the Citizens' Association was the example which he set of vigilant and courageous defense of the public interest. His was no spasmodic zeal but a steady flame of patriotism. It not only diffused its own warmth but kindled others. How could one stand in the presence of this octogenarian and in the face of his lifetime of devotion refuse aid to a public cause? One could not and one did not. Mr. Cole thus exerted a far-reaching influence which in his modesty he would have disclaimed and which certainly he did not realize.

We shall miss the meaning of his life if we do not accept it as a challenge to us who remain. Political standards in our community are at a low ebb. Candidates are willing to sell their souls for preferment, and, elected, they are loyal to their political masters and not to the people. In a time of urgent need the public interests are disregarded in the ignoble pursuit of partisan and selfish

aims. But there is a saving conscience in the body politic which, if we will only appeal to it, will again speak. The man whom we honor today would bid us take heart; with courage denounce the wrong; unite in support of the right. The degree to which we respond with self-sacrifice in this critical hour will be the real measure of our appreciation of George E. Cole.

### MR. CLIFFORD W. BARNES:

In his service as organizer and president of the Legislative Voters' League, Mr. Cole showed the same rare qualities which had distinguished him in his other relations: sane judgment, invulnerable will, fearless courage, high ideals, love of country, and above all a spirit of self-sacrifice. In an age noted for its materialism, its eager quest for wealth, its search for pleasure and preferment, he gladly gave up all he had for the common weal. The soldier spirit of his boyhood days, which led him to enlist at such an early age in the army of the Union, remained with him throughout his long and useful life, and he counted the loss of money, time and effort — as he would have counted the loss of life itself — a sacrifice none too great to lay upon the altar of his country's welfare.

The following resolution was passed at the meeting of the board of directors of the Legislative Voters' League, October 13, 1930, and was unanimously adopted:

"George E. Cole was a stalwart, fearless and dependable citizen, who demonstrated on many occasions a courageous support of those things which make for better Americanism.

"A soldier in the Civil War, he carried his militancy into times of peace and fought vigorously for the ideals which visioned the aspirations of those devoted to the public welfare.

"An organizer and first president of the Legislative Voters' League, he was an organizer and first president of the Municipal Voters' League and four times president of the Citizens' Association. His achievements in these and other activities are part of the records of the community to which he gave unsparingly of his time and effort.

"Both in public and private life his service was sincere and effective, and his integrity unquestioned.

"In his passing, the Legislative Voters' League loses a friend and counselor to whom it can ill afford to say farewell.

"As a testimonial of the esteem of his associates it is directed that these words be placed in the archives of the League, and that an engrossed copy be sent to his family as an expression of the regard in which he was held by his fellow members."

## MR. DAVID E. SHANAHAN:

To my mind Mr. Cole was the highest type of an American citizen. He stood for principle and principle alone. He was guided by a high sense of public duty. He believed that every citizen should participate in the affairs of his city, state and nation. His participation in public affairs was not for gain nor publicity. He never sought nor wanted public office, nor public favors of any kind. His desire was for public officials who would bring to office honesty, integrity and service for the benefit of the entire community. He was much interested in legislative affairs, and for more than a quarter of a century worked long and earnestly for a constitutional convention in Illinois.

George E. Cole's long life in Chicago was one of usefulness on behalf of the public. He was a fearless, outspoken man in condemnation of public officials who betrayed the people. He was an upstanding fighter for the right. He asked no quarter and gave no quarter. He believed that public office was a public trust. To him must go the credit of raising the standard of the City Council of Chicago and of the General Assembly of Illinois.

His passing was not only a loss to Chicago but to the entire State of Illinois and to this great nation.

## PROFESSOR GRAHAM TAYLOR:

I reserve for the last word a message which comes from a young minister, pastor of the Congregational church which Mr. Cole attended during his suburban residence at Wilmette. Just before he left the city for the South last winter, he called me aside in the club one day and said: "Should anything happen to me while I am gone, I wish you would ask Roy E. Bowers to conduct the service. Somehow I love that young fellow: he is so kind and natural and brotherly. I have never been a member of the church, but I have been a reader of the Bible all my life, and I have been a man of prayer." Then he added, "If Clifford Barnes and Raymond Robins are anywhere near and would add a word about me, I would like it."

Mr. Bowers came back from his Cleveland parish, and at the home of Mr. Cole's son in Winnetka he conducted the service with heartfelt sincerity. I asked him if he would write something that I could read here today, and he has written these words:

"It was some years after his first great battle for a better city that I came into personal contact with 'Citizen Cole.' I soon found that, like most executives whose tasks involve a large amount of physical and moral courage, he was a mystic.

"He had gone into the struggle with the purpose to see it through. Many reformers are like the amateur, who feels himself under no necessity or compulsion to play the part assigned him: the moment things become too hot for him he may quit. So, as one after another failed to stand by, he came to realize that he would have to plant his fulcrum squarely on God.

"Often I have heard him say, 'In those first three months I did more praying than in all my life before. I had to have God's help. I never could have succeeded without that.' Having got his life on that Center, nothing budged him.

"I came to know him shortly after his first great bereavement; a second and a third followed. Still a rugged warrior ready for any call of duty, much of his conversation was in heaven. Serenity and a beautiful gentleness and sympathy possessed him. To the very end he remained a believer in man because he was a believer in the spiritual nature of the Universe; in God as the source and guarantor of ideal values and moral success."













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